# The Nation

FOUNDED 1865

Vol. CXXXVII NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 1933 No. 3570


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SUBSCRIPTION RATES: Five dollars per annum postpaid in the United States; to Canada, $5.50; and to other foreign countries, $6.00.

THE NATION, No. 20 Vesey Street, New York City, Cable Address: NATION, New York. Muriel C. Gray, Advertising Manager. British Agent, Gertrude M. Cross, 23 Brunswick Square, London W. C. 1, England.


THE PROCEEDINGS at Decatur, Alabama, preliminary to the trial of the Scottsboro prisoners—the third trial for one of them, the second for the other six—began in a way anything but reassuring for those who care for the State's honor or reputation among the other forty-seven commonwealths of this country. Samuel S. Leibowitz, counsel for the defense, hoped to show—as a basis for upsetting the indictments—that there were no Negroes on the roll from which the grand jury was drawn. When it turned out that the names of several Negroes appeared on the roll, Mr. Leibowitz introduced evidence to show that they had been placed there after the Scottsboro grand jury had been drawn in 1931. After the clerk of the jury board had testified that two red lines had been drawn under the names in the two big volumes upon the completion of the roll, a handwriting expert from New York expressed the belief that where the inscription of the Negroes' names ran over the red lines the names had been written over them, indicating insertion after the red lines had been drawn. In the case of one name, he said, the tail of the letter "y" was superimposed not only on the red lines but also on top of the inscription "3/10/31," marking the date when a new jury commission took office. In spite of this testimony, the *only evidence* offered on the subject, Judge Callahan refused to rule that there had been fraud in the preparation of the jury roll. It would be a "reflection" which he was not justified in making, he said, on the integrity of the jury board and the probate judge of Jackson County. He is right about the "reflection," but there will be a difference of opinion as to whether or not it would be justifiable. Some may even feel that Judge Callahan's ruling is a "reflection" upon his own judicial fitness.

"SUNNY JIM" ROLPH, Governor of California, has a few thoughts about the recent lynching of the kidnappers and murderers of Brooke Hart in San José. "This," declared Governor Rolph, "is the best lesson that California has ever given the country. We show the country that the State is not going to tolerate kidnapping." And this, Governor Rolph, is tantamount to incitement to violence in its worst form. When the chief official of a State gives his official sanction to a lynching, the citizens of the State who still believe in due process of law might as well pack up their things and go elsewhere. It is perhaps worth pointing out to the Governor of California that even the chief executives of States in the deep South, after a lynching of a black man who has raped a white woman, have the decency to deplore the lawless act, although their words are not as a rule supported by deeds. And more than that, although kidnapping is certainly the most brutal and dastardly of crimes, whether or not it is accompanied by murder, there are still courts of law in this country where kidnappers and murderers may be dealt with in an orderly and lawful manner.

ON OCTOBER 18 a Negro was lynched in Princess Anne, Maryland. Immediately afterward, responsible persons in the Free State, headed by Governor Ritchie, announced in loud voices that No Stone Would Be Left Unturned in the attempt to apprehend and punish the lynchers. About a week after the lynching a grand jury met and investigated the case of some twenty persons whose names had been furnished by Somerset County officials as those who had been present at the lynching. But at the grand-jury hearings nobody was discovered who had been anything but an innocent bystander at the affair or who saw among any of the lynchers a familiar face. They all seemed to be strangers. On November 1 it was announced that Attorney-General Lane was preparing to go down to Princess Anne in a day or two to reopen the investigation. On the same day an innocent jest was perpetrated by one of the Princess Anne sheriffs, Luther Daugherty by name. Mr. Daugherty was quoted as saying that he had the names of ten new witnesses to the lynching. When questioned about them by State's Attorney Robins, Mr. Daugherty said he hadn't any names at all. "Well, Luther," asked Mr. Robins, "why did you tell the papers that?" "Oh, just for fun," replied Mr. Daugherty, to show what a funster he is. On November 17, instead of going to Princess Anne, Attorney-General Lane asked Mr. Robins for the arrest of nine persons alleged to have been participants in the lynching. Mr. Robins answered that he had received the request but did not plan to


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make the arrests, although he did plan sometime to call the grand jury again and ask it to consider doing so. Mr. Lane submitted Mr. Robins's refusal to the First Judicial Court of Maryland. The judges, it is reported, will presently confer with Mr. Robins and advise him what procedure they consider best under the circumstances. At least Governor Ritchie has taken the Princess Anne officials to task for their procrastination, and more important, he has in effect indorsed the anti-lynching law just introduced into the legislature, which would give the Governor larger powers in cases where violence was suspected, including that of removing sheriffs for cause. But nothing has yet been heard from Princess Anne.

MR. SPRAGUE'S RESIGNATION as financial adviser to the Secretary of the Treasury was a natural and inevitable step in the "purification" of the Treasury, which has proceeded with Hitler-like thoroughness ever since Mr. Woodin's departure on an indefinite leave of absence, Mr. Acheson's forced resignation, and the elevation of Mr. Morgenthau to the Acting Secretaryship. The immediate significance of these changes is perfectly clear: Dr. George F. Warren, professor of agricultural economics at Cornell University, is the virtual dictator of the nation's monetary policy, and the experiment which aims to restore the 1926 price level by raising the price of gold and depreciating the exchange value of the dollar will be carried through. Although a final verdict as to the soundness of the financial views of Professor Warren cannot be rendered until completion of the present experiment, it may be helpful to look at the record thus far. According to this theory, there is a direct and causal relationship between the dollar value of gold and the commodity price level. Thus if it is desired to raise the price level by a certain percentage, this can be accomplished by advancing the dollar price of gold by the same amount. The Bureau of Labor Statistics wholesale-price index, computed on the basis of 1926 as 100, stood at 59.6 in the week of March 4, 1933. An increase of 67 per cent in wholesale prices was therefore required to restore the 1926 level. By a strict interpretation of the Warren theory, this could be achieved by increasing the price of gold by 67 per cent, or from $20.67 an ounce to $34.52 an ounce.

SO MUCH FOR THEORY. What has actually occurred? On November 21, the date of Mr. Sprague's departure, the Reconstruction Finance Corporation announced a new high price of $33.76 for an ounce of gold, a figure within 76 cents of the amount theoretically necessary for restoration of the 1926 wholesale-price level. But the wholesale-price index of the Bureau of Labor Statistics actually stood at 71.7 in the week ending November 18, the latest date for which information is available. In other words, an increase of 63 per cent in the price of gold has brought about an advance of just over 20 per cent in wholesale prices. The gold-buying policy, therefore, has thus far failed by a large margin to accomplish the results which a strict interpretation of the Warren theory would lead one to expect. It may be said by the proponents of the gold-buying theory that considerable time is required to permit the lagging adjustment of commodity prices to the changed cost of gold. But even if this modification be accepted at its face value, it is obvious that the dollar should be stabilized now at approximately its present level, since that level is the one theoretically necessary to restore 1926 prices. The value of reaching any such level until purchasing power is proportionately increased is a question of far greater importance, which we discuss on another page of this issue.

A FIGHT has just been made, and won, in Washington by a group which does not ordinarily resort to such tactics. The newly appointed Acting Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau, Jr., began his duties by corking up all sources of information, even for strictly factual and statistical information, except himself and his press representative. The procedure in regard to public information has varied greatly under different administrations and according to departments, and it is not certain that Mr. Morgenthau's restrictions were more drastic than a good many others in the past, or even in the present. But the Treasury correspondents acted in a new way about them. Instead of accepting or making a quiet protest against the restrictions, the Treasury correspondents followed President Roosevelt's own example and took their case to the country. They sent out thousands of words in regard to the restrictions, including their own protest to the Acting Secretary. People who had never heard before of the way in which much Washington news is bottled up, or filtered out through approved and discreet channels, voiced surprise and indignation over the censorship, in consequence of which it was promptly relaxed. In the past American journalists have rarely fought for their right to get and give the news. Tradition decreed that they maintain friendly relations with their sources of information as the best way to get material, even when it involved submitting to unreasonable restrictions or personal indignities. It is highly doubtful if the method is a sound one for getting news, and certainly it is not conducive to self-respect. The Treasury correspondents have shown that effective public support may be enlisted in a good cause by showing fight.

THANKS TO GOVERNOR PINCHOT, it looks as if the honor of being the first State to pass comprehensive legislation dealing with the liquor situation after prohibition would go to Pennsylvania. His radical liquor-control measure erecting a State monopoly and barring the saloon forever is likely to become law before this issue of *The Nation* is published. His plan to put the government of Pennsylvania into the business of selling liquor in State-operated stores after the Canadian model thoroughly cowed the legislature. This is certainly a new departure for any Northern State. It carries with it the prohibition of the importation into the State of any liquor whatsoever except such as is purchased by the State through its own stores. There are to be certain licensed places which may sell liquor for consumption on the premises only—hotels of good reputation with dining-rooms seating forty or more people, restaurants accommodating at least seventy, bona fide clubs in existence two years or more which operate a dining-room and kitchen, and dining cars and passenger boats. All these places may be open for the sale of liquor from twelve o'clock noon until twelve o'clock midnight on week days. They may not sell to minors. To take the stores out of politics they are to be located by the local Courts of Quarter Sessions. They will be open from 9 a.m. until 9 p.m. for the sale in con-

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tainers of liquor which may not be drunk on the premises. The net proceeds of this business will be placed in a special fund, and Governor Pinchot is already asking the legislature to vote $20,000,000 of the estimated profits to unemployment relief and $8,000,000 for old-age assistance. A brewery permit is to cost $1,000, and each distillery will pay not less than $5,000 per annum. In New Jersey and elsewhere plans have now been submitted for legislative action, New Jersey's special commission urging a liquor dictator. In New York the temporary liquor board has issued some hasty regulations. We shall discuss these later, together with the federal government's proposed code for the control of distillers.

MAXIM LITVINOV'S successful trip to the United States wound up with what was perhaps the most extraordinary dinner ever given in New York City. Some 2,500 persons faced a stage behind which hung a huge American flag and—the red flag with the Soviet hammer and sickle upon it. For carrying or flying a red flag hundreds of persons have been arrested and jailed in America during the past sixteen years. Even more striking was the audience standing while the organ played "My Country" and followed it with the "Internationale." Yes, incredible as it seems, there were a number of our most conservative capitalists actually applauding the "Internationale." Probably they did not recognize its appeal for solidarity, fraternity, and destruction of the capitalists, but there they were—General Atterbury of the Pennsylvania Railroad, President Loomis of the Lehigh Valley, Owen D. Young and Gerard Swope of the General Electric, Gordon Rentschler of the National City Bank, the head of the anti-Bolshevik New York *Herald Tribune,* Parker Gilbert of J. P. Morgan and Company, and, believe it or not, the president of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, so long absolutely opposed to recognition and now won to it, like many another, by the tingling of the pocket nerve. Not a liberal editor appeared on the dais, and hardly a man or woman who battled for Russian recognition when to do so was to invite contumely, insult, and abuse.

OUR NEW AMBASSADOR to Austria, George H. Earle, 3d, is an up-and-coming gentleman. On November 14 he notified the Viennese newspapermen that during a motor trip just concluded he had warned the authorities in all the Austrian provinces that the American people "cannot cooperate sympathetically with a country where people are persecuted on account of birth." He then made it even stronger by declaring to his interviewers that if the Austrian people "encourage anti-Semitism they will lose American sympathy and help." This is amazing language for an accredited Ambassador from the United States to use, but somehow we rejoice at his plain speaking. Probably he thinks that since Austria is entirely the orphan child of the Allies, the United States, and the League of Nations, he can be a little more free and easy in advising and admonishing it than would be the case in a country standing on its own feet. We are frank to say that we wish that our Ambassador to Berlin might soon find the occasion to be similarly indiscreet, and our President too. Our country ought certainly to be put definitely on record as being emphatically opposed to anti-Semitism, and to the even worse persecution of pacifists, liberals, Socialists, and Communists that has been going on under Hitler.

MR. ROOSEVELT is said to be unwilling to recognize any government in Cuba unless it can "be shown to have the united support of all factions of political belief." Could his own Administration qualify for foreign recognition under those terms?

AFTER A HALF-CENTURY of bitter opposition to union movements among its employees, the New York Edison Company has recently shown a sudden and singular anxiety to provide its 15,000 workers with collective bargaining. While an injunction suit brought by the Brotherhood of Edison Employees of America to restrain the company from interfering with collective bargaining by the use of coercion and intimidation was pending in the federal courts, the company held an "election" among its employees. The collective-bargaining plan voted upon was initiated and drawn up by officers of the company "in conjunction with employees" who were previously selected by the company itself. Opportunity was given to any fifty employees to place their heads in the lion's mouth by submitting any other proposal in opposition to the company's plan. No other plan was submitted and the company announced an overwhelming victory when the votes were counted. According to the Edison officials, all the "usual safeguards" were taken to insure a fair vote and honest election, the first safeguard being that the president of the company appointed the board of tellers to count the vote. Election notices distributed by the tellers reminded the voters that "unity is the basis of contentment." Appeals made by employees to the federal and State courts and the local and national NRA boards failed to prevent the election. The courts and the NRA, it is feared, will finally take the view that if there was no actual corruption in the taking of the vote, the Edison employees were free from the "interference, coercion, or restraint" forbidden by the recovery act—despite the fact that employees entering the voting booths did so knowing that the company bitterly opposed union organization, and that it had initiated, drawn up, and distributed the plan and selected the board of tellers. Such "Hitler elections" may prove an effective device in nullifying Section 7a of the recovery act.

*THE NATION'S* SPIES, who had a few trifling matters about Cabinet officials to report last week, bow before the superior talents of the spies of the New York *Herald Tribune.* The latter actually were so fortunate as to catch Herbert Bayard Swope up in the air in an elevator and unable to get down because there was a hitch in the machinery. Mr. Swope stayed up for forty-five minutes; not a single elevating thought coursed through his mind during that period. He was occupied in (a) wondering how he would get down, (b) wishing he had a drink, (c) noting that one of the women in the car with him was fat and if they started to fall he could land on her. After the elevator episode Mr. Swope went to call on Alfred E. Smith. Then he went back to his own office. Then he went to the washroom where he washed his hands, and on attempting to get out found that the door was locked and he couldn't. He banged on the door with his fist and one of his secretaries let him out. Then he went home and had dinner. Then he went to see "She Loves Me Not." A day in the life of Mr. Swope, showing that our busy executives don't have it so easy, either, Mawruss.

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# Fatter Prices and Thinner Dollars

TWO naive delusions threaten the nation's sanity. Their common acceptance by the public is less dangerous—until Congress meets—than the fact that they appear to dominate the thinking of Mr. Roosevelt, who has now taken upon his own shoulders the personal dictation of the nation's fiscal policies. The first is the easy assumption that a general rise in prices will automatically bring business recovery. The second is the equally insidious belief that "inflation" will ease the burden of debts for the masses in this country. The President's policies are admittedly directed at the restoration of the 1926 level of wholesale prices—which is about 39 per cent above present quotations. He is also known to believe that a cut in the dollar's value will reduce the staggering obligations of American debtors, under bond to pay off $134,000,000,000 in long-term commitments, not to mention carrying charges which now amount to 20 per cent of the nation's reduced income.

The New Deal economics has obscured, as did the economics of the New Era, the homely truth that only by the actual production of wealth can wealth be obtained. It cannot be conjured up by the forced growth of two shares of stock where one grew before any more than it can by slicing the dollar in two. Only by an increase in the production of goods and services can the income of the nation—of all of us—be increased.

Will a general increase of prices increase production? Two feeble and neglected battalions of the New Deal army—Mrs. Rumsey's Consumers' Advisory Board in the NRA and Dr. Howe's Consumers' Counsel Division in the AAA—know the answer; but they have hardly been given the opportunity they should to shout it from the housetops. Higher prices can bring increased production in the long run only if wages and salaries go up at least as fast and as far. One might be justified in saying that they should go up faster and farther. Business without a buyer is no business at all. The prices of farm products, of course, are at the moment a special case. The disparity of their low levels in relation to the prices of manufactured products calls for special measures to restore an equilibrium. But monetary policies which affect all prices at once merely perpetuate the difficulty on another level. If even a small fraction of the time and effort now being thrown by the Administration into raising prices were to be devoted to the immediate expansion of consumer purchasing power, recovery would seem less remote.

The generals of the New Deal must sooner or later join battle with the owners of American industry over a more effective distribution of the national income. More of it, in proportion, must go to those who buy food, clothing, houses, cars; and less to those who invest their funds in new factories and machines to produce them. If capitalism is to endure, a fine line in the division of earnings must somehow be found which will give business enough profit to nourish its incentive and consumers enough money to sustain their purchasing power. So far the recovery program, despite the establishment of minimum wage rates through industrial codes and the development of public-works projects and relief measures, has failed to establish or even to approach that necessary balance; but unless it can be reached, private business will give way to business run by the state.

As for relief of the masses of debtors, this also can come—unless we adopt the desperate expedient of wholesale repudiation—only by an increase in their income, and this in turn depends upon an increase in the nation's productivity. It is absurd to think that as the result of higher prices, achieved either through the threat or the actuality of inflation, the majority of those who owe money will be better able to pay their debts. The contrary will be true. The income of a large majority of the American people comes from wages and salaries. Many seem to think that the morning after the value of the dollar had been cut in half they would automatically get twice as many dollars in their pay envelope. The fact is, of course, that they would get the same number of dollars as they did before unless their rates of wages were increased. But whenever currencies are inflated, prices rise faster than do wages. Those salary- and wage-earners who have mortgaged their homes—and who has not?—will find their debt burdens increased as the dollar is depleted because they will have to pay progressively more and more for food and clothing and shelter. A great majority of the people are creditors as well as debtors—and as creditors they lose by inflation of the currency. The bank owes them their deposits, the insurance company will some day owe them their accumulated premiums. As the dollar declines in purchasing power, as the value of the "gilt-edged" securities in which their money has been invested by its custodians shrinks—for it is bonds, not stocks, which go down first in an inflation—the financial backlogs will crumble away.

Of the masses of ordinary people the farmers are the only ones who stand to gain anything from inflation. Because their earnings come not from salaries and wages but directly from the sale of farm products, the increase in prices which follows currency debasement would bring some increased income at once. But they would pay more for their feed and their seeds and for farm machinery; and the demand for the products on which their income depends would decline with the shrinking purchasing power of the town and city dwellers who make up the bulk of the population. Farmers who still have money in the bank and carry insurance would lose along with the rest of the people as the dollar is cut in terms of what it will buy. It is the speculators and the owners of certain common stocks that come out ahead at the end of an inflation—not the people as a whole.

Does the Administration want to sacrifice the interests of the great majority of the American wage and salaried workers for the dubious benefit of a small minority of the population? Mr. Roosevelt is noted for his political sagacity. He would do well to remember—if his attention is centered on debts—that outstanding urban-mortgage loans amount to about $35,000,000,000 compared with about $9,000,000,000 of farm-mortgage debts; that only 40 per cent of American farmers are mortgaged at all and that two-thirds of these are located in the North Central States. The real interests of the various groups of the population cannot be judged by the relative noise and political disturbance they create.

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*Drawing by Eva Herrmann*

## William H. Woodin

*The Greatest Secretary of the Treasury Since Andrew W. Mellon*

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# What May Be Done at Montevideo

DELEGATIONS from the twenty-one independent nations of this hemisphere are assembling in the capital of Uruguay to take part in the Seventh Pan-American Conference. Given the failure of the World Economic Conference at London, the substitution of force for negotiation in the Far East, and the universal decline of internationalism, the prospects of achievement at Montevideo have seemed slight. Even those prospects, moreover, suffered a setback through President Roosevelt's declaration on the eve of our delegation's departure that "unsettled conditions, such as European commercial quota restrictions, have made it seem desirable for the United States to forgo immediate discussion of such matters as currency stabilization, uniform import prohibitions, permanent customs duties, and the like." As if the "unsettled conditions" which afflict the whole world were not rooted in part, at least, in just these economic problems. In this hemisphere, where international trade has sharply declined, where governments have fallen and unrest persists because of the inability to market basic products, "such matters" as "import prohibitions" and "customs duties" are primary, and should have been taken up before this through the negotiation of reciprocal trade agreements as the direct way to settle "unsettled conditions." As for currency stabilization, fluctuating and uncertain monetary standards form the greatest obstacle not only to the improvement of inter-American trade but to the maintenance of existing commerce. Yet the President bars discussion of "such matters." Again, as at London, he blames Europe. Far more than "European commercial quota restrictions" it is our own domestic policies, the curtailment of production under the Agricultural Adjustment Administration and the artificially increased price levels sought by both the AAA and the NRA, to say nothing of our deliberately unstabilized dollar, that have made it "seem desirable" to the President not to discuss ways and means for Latin American nations to sell to us more of their staples and for our farmers and manufacturers to find an outlet for their surpluses. Thus even before the conference starts, the United States has dealt it a serious blow. Secretary Cordell Hull is estopped from pursuing the course for which he is most qualified by experience and predilection—the negotiation of reciprocal trade agreements and lower tariffs.

At the same time the prohibition against a consideration of these fundamental economic questions throws the political aspects of inter-American relations into sharp relief, and here the United States has a great opportunity. Previous pan-American conferences have been conspicuous for the disparity between our high-sounding professions and our acts—a contrast of which every Latin American has been keenly aware. Our southward expansion after the Spanish-American War, our aggressions under our changing interpretations of the Monroe Doctrine, have provoked increasing irritation, distrust, and fear among our neighbors. Our intervention in Haiti and Santo Domingo produced an unscheduled interruption at the fifth conference at Santiago in 1923. With the guns of renewed intervention in Nicaragua booming across the Caribbean, opposition to our imperialism came close to wrecking the sixth conference at Havana in 1928. But for the repressive influence on the Cuban press exercised by Machado, the passive attitude of the Mexican delegation—brought about by the policies of Ambassador Morrow, who was present as a United States delegate—the presence for the first time of the President of the United States, and the pontifical lucubrations of Secretary of State Hughes, that conference, and indeed the whole principle of pan-Americanism, might have been shattered by the opposition to United States domination.

That issue will be raised again at the seventh conference. Mr. Hughes's pronunciamiento that the United States "cannot forgo its right" to intervene to protect "the lives and property of its nationals" will be challenged by the united sentiment of the twenty other nations of this hemisphere. If the United States is wise, it will break fully and frankly with past practice and policy and renounce the right of arbitrary unilateral intervention. When Mexicans are lynched in Texas or killed by mobs in the orchards of California for demanding a living wage, Mexico rushes no troops across the border, orders no warship to Los Angeles. Mexicans who come here must and do take their chances with the kind of law and order they find here. American citizens who go abroad should be willing to do likewise. Actually such a policy is more productive of safety for our nationals than intervention, which obviously does not bring the dead to life, but tends to imperil nationals still living in the country to which we have rushed armed forces, to say nothing of the casualties directly resulting from armed invasion.

There is a fair prospect of such a New Deal in our relations with our southern neighbors. President Roosevelt took a step in this direction by his proposal on May 16 that nations "agree that they will send no armed force of whatsoever nature across their frontiers." The proposal was, to be sure, contingent on the actions of other nations, but that contingency does not apply to the adjacent countries of this hemisphere in their relations with us. There is also the President's declared purpose to play the part of the "good neighbor." There is Secretary Hull's evident desire to establish a new era of equal dealing in this hemisphere, a policy manifested by more than the usual verbal generalizations in the abstention from armed intervention in Cuba, the refusal to let Secretary Swanson land there, and Mr. Hull's unprecedented statement that the United States would not land marines to protect property. A declaration of a new non-intervention policy, except where we are specifically obligated by existing treaties (as in Cuba and Panama) would be a great step forward. It would be in the fullest sense a victory, not for the Latin Americans but for us. Our jingoes will never understand that the best defense for the Panama Canal is to make true friends of its neighboring peoples. And, from a purely material standpoint, trade is fostered by good-will.

Closely allied to the question of intervention is the Monroe Doctrine. It too has been productive of much ill-feeling. Both the Argentine and Mexico have repudiated it. The attitude of Latin American states is that they do not

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fear aggression from non-American Powers, do not require our protection, have never asked it, and indeed fear us more than they do any of the Old World nations against whom the doctrine was promulgated. So intense has the feeling become that some of the South American states would doubtless refuse even a proposal to continentalize the Monroe Doctrine on the ground that it neither concerns nor interests them. Nevertheless, advances in that direction by the United States could not but be productive of better understanding.

Related to the foregoing is the Cuban question. President Roosevelt's policy in Cuba has so far been a tragic exemplification of good intentions wrecked by inept execution, but there is promise of a change for the better in the recall of Sumner Welles as Ambassador. Either through obstinacy or personal pique Mr. Welles has stuck to it that we must not recognize the Grau Government. His recall indicates that that policy is to be reversed. *The Nation,* to be sure, would not have nominated Jefferson Caffery as Mr. Welles's successor. Mr. Caffery's aid to our oil and banking interests in Colombia does not mark him as an ideal envoy of the New Deal to Latin America, but in so far as his appointment looks to the recognition of the Grau Government it is to be heartily approved. Recognition of Cuba should be followed by the elimination of the Platt Amendment and the end of our special powers and responsibilities.

The Haitian situation, likewise recently discussed in these columns, offers another example of current diplomatic ineptitude likely to nullify our good purposes in Latin America. Nothing is more paradoxical than the spectacle of the New Deal Administration extending and enlarging its financial control in Haiti to collect a debt for private bondholders. A declaration of willingness to reopen and revise the recent "executive agreement" will go far to remove a needless source of misunderstanding and conflict.

Reorganization of the Pan-American Union to make it more truly representative has been stubbornly resisted by the United States in the past. Concessions to the insistent demands of Latin American states have been made grudgingly. Considering that the union is an organization designed to promote the mutual interest of the twenty-one American nations, and that our greater size and wealth inevitably give us a preponderating influence, we should not only welcome efforts to secure a greater participation in direction and control by the other members states but should lead in that direction.

It must not be thought that pan-Americanism has to date been wholly meaningless and inconsequential. If it has failed to achieve conspicuous results, a great many lesser agreements relating to health, copyrights, patents, communications, and numerous other matters, the total value of which is considerable, stand to the credit of the conferences. The conferences have fostered cultural contacts. With the Orient a realm of military conquest, with Europe an armed camp and apparently headed for another war, the comparative peace and kindliness of the Americas today make the Western Hemisphere appear as the one area of relative sanity, a great belt of insulation against the madness of other regions. It preserves still the contrast between the deep-seated hates and prejudices of older cultures and the readier and friendlier adaptability of younger peoples. A constructive policy to preserve and strengthen peace and good-will in these continents may save civilization for the whole world. It is with that larger hope that we should approach Montevideo.

# Arms and the League

DISARMAMENT has not yet been achieved. The cause of the deadlock must lie somewhere. Since the Disarmament Conference has been held under the auspices of the League of Nations, the fault must lie with the League. Thus reason the statesmen of Europe in their frantic efforts to avoid looking the facts squarely in the face and acting in accordance with them.

The Italians, not perhaps without an eye to the possibility of bringing the conference to Rome, are broadly suggesting that the League should be abandoned altogether. In this they have been given some encouragement by the British, who seem to feel that because Germany and Japan have withdrawn, and America and Russia are not members, it would be more practical to continue the disarmament discussions outside the framework of the Geneva organization. Secretary-General Avenol, a Frenchman, would save the League, in name at least, but strip it of virtually all its powers, thus reducing it to the status of a consultative council or debating society. The French delegates, on the other hand, appear disposed to hang on to the League in its present form. It has served them well and may continue to do so in the future.

Moreover, the French suspect, and perhaps rightly, that to turn the disarmament problem over to a group of four or five leading Powers for solution would place France at a disadvantage. In such a group the British and Italians would seek to strike a balance between the intransigence of the French and the German demands for rearmament, and France is not prepared to yield anything to Germany. The Americans at Geneva are insisting that, whatever be done with regard to the League, the conference must be kept at Geneva and on a strictly international basis.

If the League were to be scrapped, it would mean a return to the dubious and often secret methods of pre-war diplomacy. Weak as the Geneva body has proved itself, it remains the only international organization equipped for the task of handling the problems of peace. Nor does it seem that anything is to be gained by diluting the League Covenant in order to bring Germany, Japan, Russia, and the United States into the fold, as M. Avenol proposes. Certainly Articles X and XVI, which the Secretary-General would eliminate, have had nothing to do with the disarmament deadlock.

Indeed, the whole quarrel over the League quite ignores the fact that the disarmament fiasco is in no way related to the League machinery as such. The obstacles to disarmament would remain much the same whether the problem was left to an international body such as that at Geneva or to the whims and wire-pulling of the backstairs diplomatists of the years before 1914. For these obstacles are to be found primarily in the selfish nationalism of all the Powers represented at the conference. Until the statesmen of the world can discover some formula under which this nationalism can be subordinated to the higher interests of international peace and good-will, disarmament will be difficult, if not impossible, of achievement.

Meanwhile, far from moving toward internationalism, the European statesmen have by their senseless quarreling over the League merely added another to the several obstacles which until now have prevented agreement.

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# Issues and Men

## "The Birds Will Sing Tomorrow"

IT seems to me that no more patriotic or useful service has been recorded for some time than the resignation of the adviser to the Treasury, Oliver M. W. Sprague. For a number of years I have regretted the failure of many American officials to resign when they should do so. Times innumerable I have seen Cabinet officers committed to policies in which they did not believe and compelled to take part in actions to which they were at heart utterly opposed. Had they been foreign officials, notably English, I think that they would have resigned. But there was always some reason why they had to compromise with their consciences and continue to stay in the official family. They needed the salary and did not know where they would get another, or they thought that it would be better for them to stay in office and keep the President from going too far; they were sure that they could exercise an ameliorating influence. Needless to say, they never did; needless to say, their characters suffered and likewise their influence with all who knew the actual circumstances. So when I hear of a man in high position resigning as Mr. Sprague did, with a splendidly written and absolutely frank letter setting forth the reasons for this protest, I am more than delighted.

But it is not about the resignation of Mr. Sprague that I wish to write today; I want rather to record my belief that he spoke the absolute truth in his letter to the President. I had to confess the other night to a former American diplomat, who like myself is well disposed toward President Roosevelt personally, that I could throw no light on why it is that again and again the President disregards the advice of genuine experts, and why he picks out men for important offices who have had no previous training for the jobs to which he assigns them. That is true of Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Raymond Moley, and Mr. Woodin, too, to say nothing of Professor George F. Warren, who happens to be an expert on agricultural problems. Someone who knows Mr. Morgenthau well said of him the other day that he was an ideal public servant, honest, able, hard-working, with no personal ax to grind, in politics absolutely for the reason that he desires to serve his country. There is only one out about him, this friendly critic explained: he knows nothing whatsoever about finance, banking, or currency problems. Otherwise he is an ideal Acting Secretary of the Treasury! But even there we have to put in a caveat—I refer to his stupidity in clapping on a censorship at the Treasury and to his extremely ill-advised levity in dealing with the resignation of Mr. Sprague: "I think the sun will rise tomorrow and the next day, and that the birds will sing."

Now I believe in the extraordinary adaptability of men of affairs in this country. They have been known to leave their law books and their plows and turn into remarkably good generals and public officials. But there are certain fields that require particular technical knowledge, long business experience, or actual contacts with the problems involved, and precisely in one of these fields lies the question of American financial policy in this grave emergency. I do not believe that it can be properly solved by men who have had no actual experience in dealing with financial problems of vast magnitude and extraordinary difficulty. The President not only had Mr. Sprague to turn to; he could have gone to Princeton University and found there a professor who has been called into consultation by almost a dozen different nations to stabilize their currencies and overhaul their affairs. He has been financial adviser to the United States Philippine Commission, financial adviser to the governments of Mexico and Guatemala, and chairman of the Commission of American Financial Advisers in Colombia. South Africa, Chile, Poland, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru have all called upon him for his aid, and he was the expert on currency and banking on the Dawes Commission in 1925. His name happens to be E. W. Kemmerer, and if there is another man in the world with wider experience he must have hidden himself away pretty carefully. Why was not this man made Secretary of the Treasury? Why has he not been drawn into the discussions if the President decided that he did not like to talk with Mr. Sprague?

Perhaps I feel unduly alarmed about the situation, but I happen to have been in Germany at the time of inflation. I literally saw men who had been millionaires begging in the streets. I found that almost every insurance company was ruined, and that every endowment fund had disappeared; that all mortgages were paid off in depreciated currency, so that the persons who had loaned the mortgage money were robbed just as successfully as they would have been had they been held up by footpads. I saw a whole nation driven almost to despair by the daily fluctuations in currency. Their habits of thrift were destroyed because there was only one thing to do and that was to take all the money that they got and spend it before the sun set. They bought everything that money would buy—the strangest odds and ends. People who could not play the piano bought pianos in order to get something tangible into their homes that they could resell when sanity returned. They bought books they could not understand and pictures they did not want. They did not buy many clothes because clothes were not to be had; even underwear was difficult to get and could only be sold a garment or two at a time. People killed themselves right and left, as they have been doing again since Hitler came into office, because they did not know which way to turn or how to get their daily bread. When I left the Hotel Bristol after a sojourn in Berlin of a couple of weeks I gave as the usual tips one-dollar bills to the head porter and others who had taken care of me. I imagine I know how royalty must feel under such conditions, for I am sure no king ever received deeper or more grateful bows than I did. One man almost cried, and told me that he would keep the bill as long as he possibly could as it was the only thing he had that was stable. It was worth about three billion marks at that moment. Naturally I am frightened when I see the President going in the same direction, and read Mr. Sprague's earnest words advising him that we are headed straight for

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inflation. Nothing could be worse for a people; nothing could drive it nearer to disaster. Everyone who feels as Mr. Sprague does should similarly speak out.

But no one must believe that this inflation danger is a new one and that we have never faced it before. The attack upon a sound currency has come again and again and always from the West, but never with a better excuse than at present. The farmers are in a desperate condition and it is not to be wondered at that they are lured by the idea that you can run the printing-presses until you have created a large amount of greenbacks and then with them pay off the entire bonded debt of the United States. Indeed, some of them wish to go farther and so do some men in high office in Washington. They actually want to establish a great program of public works and to pay for these not by bond issues but by printing the additional amount in greenbacks. They do not ask what will become of the greenbacks; they have forgotten the story of the Confederacy and how its unsecured currency was debased until you had to pay $600 or $800 for a pair of shoes. They have forgotten that even on the Northern side the debased paper money was called "shin-plasters." They simply feel that if we should print some thirty-six billion dollar bills to pay off our public debt and meet the cost of the NRA we should be on easy street, and there would be such a large amount of currency in circulation that we should all get rich overnight. They do not know that periods of inflation are regularly followed by grave panics. As far back as April, 1874, when the House of Representatives was discussing the Maynard currency bill, which it subsequently passed, Congressman Townsend of Pennsylvania surprised the House by using a chart as an aid to the enlightenment of his fellow-members. This showed, as *The Nation* of that time reports, "by rising and falling lines, the close connection between the heights of inflation and the depths of the subsequent abysses of panic."

The leader of that fight was General Ben Butler of Civil War fame. In an interview at that time he declared that he was the only member of the New England delegation in Congress who found himself independent of the capitalists of New England and of "those who enrich themselves at the expense of the interests of the people and of the country." He might be talking today, for he declared that the cry of ruin as a result of inflation was raised by the holders of the bonded debt of the United States and he asked the reporter: "If Congress were to issue $500,000,000 of greenbacks and with them take up $500,000,000 of interest-bearing bonds, the interest would be saved, would it not? Would not the greenback be enhanced in value?" That is the reasoning of a good many people today. But President Grant could not see it that way. He vetoed the finance bill which called for the increase of paper circulation by $100,000,000, a beggarly sum in comparison with the amounts which the inflationists of today are calling for. *The Nation* of April 30, 1874, summarized his message in these words: "Inflation is in General Grant's belief a departure from the true principles of finance, national interest, national obligation to creditors, and Congressional promises . . . and of the personal views and promises advanced by him in every annual message sent to Congress and in each inaugural address." The editor of *The Nation* at that time went out of his way to call attention to the fact that when France had to pay to Germany an indemnity of $1,000,000,000 as a result of its loss of the Franco-Prussian War, it did not, as it might have done, "borrow the money in gold, settle the account with Germany, and then pay creditors in paper. The foolish, fastidious French government, however, instead of setting the printing-press going, took pains to guard against inflation by strictly limiting the issue of paper money. The result is that the discount on paper has never been above 2 per cent, was for a short time only nominal, and now the country is on the eve of resumption, with its credit absolutely unimpaired and its debt to Germany paid."

I was particularly interested to find that *The Nation* wrote at that time that one dose of inflation would merely lead to another, because it reminded me of what Al Smith, even before his latest strictures on the "boloney dollar," said when he appeared before the Senate committee which has been revealing the performances of our bank presidents. When asked if he believed in inflation he said emphatically not. Inflation, he said, was like giving a sick man "a shot of dope in the arm." It was great while it lasted, but the effect soon wore off and then the patient wanted another and a stronger dose until it got to be a habit. That is an absolutely sound analysis. Mr. Godkin, then editor of *The Nation,* put it well in our issue of April 2, 1874. Speaking of the arbitrary limit of $400,000,000 which the inflationists had fixed for their operation, he wrote: "If $100,000,000 of fresh paper will 'stimulate industry' and give us 'cheap money' as [Congressman]Kelley says, $100,000,000 more would have similar effect, and so on *ad infinitum.* Inflation is the shoreless sea under a starless sky, so that if the late action in Congress be adopted as a policy, it starts us on a voyage without end." But here Mr. Godkin was wrong; the experience of Germany shows that there is a very definite end to the inflation voyage. I know some people in Germany who declare that if the German state again undertakes that voyage they will commit suicide right off.

I am not a bit impressed by the talk of controlled inflation. I do not believe that the Warren plan of changing the gold content of the dollar will satisfy the Western inflationists. Only a few nights ago the New York *World-Telegram* quoted from the letter of an unnamed but influential Congressman, who demanded a still larger public-works program to be paid for by new greenbacks. This type of man is not going to be satisfied by a substantial rise in prices. He has got it into his head that the sure road to national wealth and health is printing money. If there were a complete financial dictatorship in this country it might be possible to print some additional currency and then stop, but when you have a Congress on your hands behind which stand a large number of farmers on the point of upheaval, and when all the Congressmen are facing reelection in 1934, it is going to be extremely hard for any President to put on the brakes. There is nothing to do but fight. The demand for inflation has been beaten every time so far, and it cannot be said that we have done badly by so doing. I know there are many who will take a different view; the silverites and the greenbackers are always with us. At the same time we have had a sound currency, and have paid our debts honestly—at least until recently.

Oswald Garrison Villard

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# The Government Builds Houses

By KATHARINE H. AMEND

WHEN the Muscle Shoals bill was finally passed by Congress last spring it was entitled: "An act to improve the navigability and to provide for the flood control of the Tennessee River; to provide for reforestation and the proper use of marginal lands in the Tennessee Valley; to provide for the agricultural and industrial development of said valley; to provide for the national defense by the creation of a corporation for the operation of government properties at and near Muscle Shoals in the State of Alabama, and for other purposes." "Other purposes" was the euphemism employed by the writers of the bill to avoid stating bluntly that the government was going into the business of producing and selling electrical power in competition with private interests that had become as ruthless as post-prohibition kidnappers.

Curiously enough, one of the other projects that is being undertaken, made possible by the phrase "provide for the industrial development of said valley" and enlarged on under Section 22 of the bill as "fostering an orderly physical, economic, and social development of said areas," may have a much more profound influence on the welfare of the average citizen of America than the power project. This is the housing development. The press releases and speeches of the officials of the Tennessee Valley Authority, the corporation created by the bill to carry out its purposes, are filled with disclaimers that there is anything romantic, idealistic, modernistic, or socialistic about its plans for housing the workers who will carry out the development. This nervousness is due to the expert sniping of the power interests, which have no intention of giving up their fight for domination. They have twisted the most innocent utterances of the directors of the Authority—some of them have been perhaps too innocent—for the purpose of discrediting the whole undertaking. They are aided by disgruntled speculators who see a grand opportunity for mulcting the public slipping from them.

Ever since Congress began discussion of the various plans for developing the power resources of the Tennessee Valley, "developers" have been inveigling suckers into buying land down there, particularly in the region of Muscle Shoals. Congressional oratory on the possibilities of "the development of a vast and mighty industrial empire" in the valley has been turned overnight into bait for the incurable dupes who still believe that the little outsider has a chance to make "one of the world's greatest fortunes in real estate." The Better Business Bureau of New York City says that "some of the prices asked and obtained for this land have been nothing short of ridiculous, ranging as high as $5,000 for a lot of property which in reality is nothing more than idle farm land. Many hundreds of lots with a tax valuation of from $50 to $100 each have been sold for several thousand dollars each." In spite of President Roosevelt's warning to the public against being drawn into land speculation, made at the time he signed the bill, the promoters have increased their activities, going to the impudent lengths of using for advertising purposes pictures of the President and Senator Norris made on their visit to Muscle Shoals.

No matter what mistakes the Tennessee Valley Authority may be charged with, it has attacked this land speculation in an effective manner. The first piece of large-scale construction started by the Authority was the creation of Norris Dam eighteen miles above Knoxville. Without decided action on the part of the Authority land values would have been run up there in such a way as to blight the future of the valley. One of the first acts of the directors was to announce the intention of acquiring all land within three miles of the dam site and to caution owners against giving options on their land for speculative purposes. They declared: "The Authority, when it comes to fixing prices at which it will be willing to purchase land, will not recognize speculative values added during this preliminary period." Chairman Arthur Morgan added: "If people buy this real estate, three-fourths of them may be stung."

The Authority secured the cooperation of local real-estate boards and chambers of commerce in spreading the news. It had a powerful weapon in the section of the bill granting the Authority right of eminent domain in condemning and acquiring anything it needed to carry out the "purposes" of the act. This club is not flourished; it is tactful for a new public corporation to conduct itself politely. But the practical business men know the Authority means business. In keeping real-estate values down to a just level the Authority is controlling a major factor in housing costs in the valley. It is only one factor, however. To cut out other speculative profits on housing, the Authority decided that it would itself build the town of Norris, where workers on the dam, power plant, and associated businesses will live.

Looking over the press releases issued by the Authority on the work under way on the town and houses, one realizes why the directors would like to carry on behind a Chinese Wall. Their plans for the town and houses are revolutionary. To be sure, the houses have no smack of modernist architecture in their appearance. Earl Sumner Draper, who has charge of the land and house planning, has evaded criticism to the extent of declining to import plans and materials that only a millionaire can use in this country without attracting invidious comment. This strategic move has further fortification in his belief that housing in any community should remain true to its environment. He feels that Cape Cod cottages and English and Norman farmhouses are out of place in the Tennessee mountains. None the less, in plotting the architectural development he has been far more modern than many so-called modernists. Depending for beauty on simple proportions and harmonious masses and using a dozen or so different plans to avoid the monotony so common in most housing projects, he has been most concerned with the economical and efficient arrangement of the interiors. Every single detail of the plans has been submitted to the test of its usefulness and durability in connection with the climate and the customs of the future inhabitants. Not so much as a single molding will be used if its only excuse for being is that houses elsewhere have such moldings.

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Had the Authority decided to erect on mud flats long rows of ugly clapboard or yellow-brick houses with interiors arranged as in the last-century houses of Philadelphia or Baltimore, the only criticism would have come from unimportant liberal circles. But nothing in the world will save the Authority from a volley of dead cats for producing for common workers a charming town, which has even been located with the desire to provide for every dwelling soul-satisfying vistas of the beautiful misty hills. It is rank heresy to give cheap homes beauty, comfort, and convenience. If that can be done for, say, $2,500, what happens to the market for $10,000 and $15,000 houses?

While some pleasant rooming-houses for single men are being erected and the housing units will range in size from two to seven rooms, the three- and four-room type will predominate. Every house will have a long porch, screened and windowed for the varying seasons; almost every house will have a fireplace, chiefly because valley people like them. The cheap electric power generated at the great dam makes economical the installation of electric stoves, heaters, and refrigerators as part of the initial equipment. Since the "construction gang" is made up of many of the valley people who will eventually work in the power plant and in the small industries that are to be permitted to grow near the dam, the Authority is omitting the usual temporary housing and providing the permanent housing and town utilities as fast as possible, with broad streets, a business center, water supply, schools, and approaches from the new Knoxville-Cincinnati highway. Because the Authority desires to experiment with the integration of seasonal local industry and small-scale intensive farming, every house will be built on a lot containing about a third of an acre. Many critics are extremely doubtful of the practicability of Mr. Morgan's plans for stimulating home industries, such as weaving and wood-working, pointing out that hand-made products are luxuries in a day of mass production. The experiment in decentralizing industry and forming small industrial units, however, can do little harm.

Norris is but the precursor of other towns which the Authority will probably build. Houses in these towns are to be leased on long and short-term contracts. Therein lies the real significance of the venture, if it is successful. One of the pet goldbricks of America is the own-your-own-home movement that has been so lovingly fostered by speculators, mortgage companies, and sentimentalists. The yearning to own a bit of real estate is a hangover from the days of an agricultural economy. Properly expressed propaganda of sales agents has been known to make strong men with a preference for the roar of the subway grow maudlin over the idea of "a little place in the suburbs where I can putter in a garden and at the same time be saving for my old age."

The idea of accumulating savings while buying a home is a sadly deflated bubble. Real-estate investment is a luxury that only the man who is dependent on something besides a salary can afford. The amateur buyer of real estate rarely has the knowledge to invest in a place that will appreciate in value in twenty years or so. While he is living in his home and straining to pay off the mortgage his house is becoming out of date and of constantly lessening value. At every stage of the game the amateur pays through the nose, as against a housing corporation. He cannot float his venture with bonds at 4½ to 5½ per cent. He pays 6 per cent and a commission to the mortgage company that advances him money on his house; he pays an additional commission on each renewal. He pays high fees to the lawyers who take care of the details as against lesser proportionate amounts paid by corporations to salaried lawyers. He pays again at retail rates when he has to fight assessments and taxes. He has to pay for his own repairs at rates much higher than those obtained by corporations, who usually maintain their own repair staffs. If at any time he loses his job his payments have to go on and taxes have to be paid or he may lose his whole investment. And as many house owners have discovered of late, in times when a man loses his job or suffers a considerable reduction in income he can rarely find a market for his place; or if he does find a market he realizes much less than he put into the venture. Even in the best of times he has no sure, quick market for his real-estate investment.

The Tennessee Valley Authority is financing its enterprises with government bonds. By doing the whole job itself and cutting out all intermediary contractors and agents, it can produce a house that, including street improvements, will probably cost about $2,500, as against a possible $7,500 that it would cost the amateur builder. After the Authority has taken into account the interest on its bonds, amortization, upkeep, taxes, and deterioration it should still be able to rent these houses at from $20 to $25 a month.

Such rents will increase the ability of the renters to put aside savings for old age in conservative bonds which will provide some steady income that can be applied against the yearly rent. The man in the Tennessee Valley who has managed to save $7,500 by the time he has to give up regular work and has invested the amount in bonds of the Authority, for example, will have more than enough annual income to cover his rent, a garden to provide him with part of his food, and an investment on which he can realize to the full whenever he chooses to go to live with his children. This aspect of the housing experiment has probably not been considered by the Authority. But the lesson is there for those who choose to read it. As the books of the Authority will be open to public inspection, those competent to understand will be able to study the possibilities of housing corporations run for investment rather than speculative profits.

# On Such a Day as This One

By MARK VAN DOREN

On such a day as this one time and sky
Flow round our shoulders mingled past division;
Past asking which, past hearing, for on high
One silence broods: the ultimate elision.

Such a day as this one lifts the seas
And loses them in air—as blue, as thin.
Yet not the seas; there is no current moving;
Not anything translucent, wave or fin.

Such a day as this one is the end;
Or would be if there were no shoulders listening.
Nothing but their question saves the world;
And that high sun, upon the silence glistening.

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# Bridgeport Goes Socialist

By JACOB C. RICH

BRIDGEPORT, the industrial capital of Connecticut and one of the most important cities in the East, has done the impossible. It has elected a full Socialist administration. What is more, it seems very happy about it. Many elements contributed to bring about this Socialist victory. One of the prime factors was the popularity of the party's chief candidate, the present Mayor, Jasper McLevy, a veteran in the cause and a member of the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party. A humble man, a roofer by trade, gaunt, sincere, persevering, he is truly one of the common people. He has a tremendous following among the lowly and harassed, and in this industrial city, tortured by four years of depression, this class constitutes almost the entire population.

Characteristic of the city's attitude toward McLevy is an incident that happened during the campaign. One of the local newspapers, in referring to a statement made by him, phrased a comment somewhat as follows: "Jasper said that under a Socialist administration" one thing or another would or would not happen. The next day the paper apologized for the familiarity. It had meant no disrespect, it explained, in calling him by his first name. It was an inadvertence due to force of habit. The reporters address him as Jasper; the rewrite men, the copy readers, the typesetters, the proofreaders know him as Jasper. In fact, the entire town calls him by his first name, and so the error crept in and went unnoticed until the edition was on the street.

I suppose no more flattering mistake or more gratifying apology could have been made in respect to a political candidate. It is true that everybody in town addresses him by his first name, and this not only familiarly but also affectionately and with a great deal of respect. Yet this intimate regard for him is a little mystifying, for the man is not given to intimacies. He is no backslapper or handshaker. He has great difficulty in remembering names and faces and in connecting one with the other in proper order. He is unquestionably one of the masses, yet I suspect that he enjoys loneliness and relishes the processes of thinking by himself. A walk through darkened streets, a tramp through fields and woods—without a gun—seclusion in a remote farmhouse, are relaxation and adventure for him. He possesses other traits that should militate against his popularity. He does not drink or smoke or indulge in any other of the engaging vices. He is a Scotch Presbyterian in a city predominantly Irish and Catholic. He has run for office many times and been defeated as often. He is a Socialist.

It is on this last count that he can be touched off. Impinge on his convictions, and this silent man becomes vehemently articulate. His gray eyes light up with prophetic fervor, his rugged face creases into missionary persuasiveness. He speaks a simple language, clipped and ungracious, yet an effective one despite, or perhaps because of, an abandonment of the polite rules of grammar and syntax. And he does swear a spicy streak in moments of anger or impatience. His concern for the common man, his pity and his dismay at the plight of his people and his city, are genuine and deeply felt. He is as completely honest a man as a fallible human being may be. His integrity is such that never during a viciously bitter preelection campaign was there any attack made on his character or personal conduct. Any such attack would have been a boomerang. Even his old-line opponents, not especially noted for the brilliance of their strategy, realized as much.

Somehow this idealist and visionary has managed to combine his altruism with a sense of the practical and the immediate. He probably knows as much of the political alignments, the hates and jealousies, among his opponents as any of the insiders. He is certainly more expert in municipal affairs than the routine city executive. He knows his city; he knows its government and its economic set-up.

With all this it would be wrong to infer that the Socialist victory in Bridgeport was a one-man affair. McLevy himself would be the first to deny it, and not out of false modesty. He would point out that the entire ticket with the exception of four of the sixteen aldermen in the running was swept in on the landslide. He would also show that the vote for the minor candidates was almost as large as that cast for him. In three of the four districts where the Socialists failed to win their aldermen, he also failed to register a plurality. He would say that the victory was due to the strength of the Socialist organization in the city and its effective campaigning.

There is not a lawyer in the Socialist Party of Bridgeport. This is said not in dispraise of lawyers, but in appraisal of the local organization. There is not a doctor, minister, or even a journalist on the membership rolls. The intelligentsia is conspicuous by its absence from the branches. This does not seem to have hurt the branches to any extent. On the contrary, it has probably given them a more intimate contact with the people and a surer grasp of their pains and problems. The local party bothers very little with the sophistries of left trend or right trend, militancy or non-militancy, or other such squabbles that occupy the dogmatic. On the other hand, it is greatly concerned with the fact that water rates in Bridgeport are four times as high as those in New York, that the gas and electric and transportation utilities demand extortionate tolls, that the people are ground between the upper millstone of increasing taxation and the nether of continued unemployment. These are the realities that the local Socialists stressed during their campaign—these and the fact that two bands of spoilsmen under Democratic and Republican Party emblems had alternated in looting the city treasury and wasting its resources on graft-ridden projects. There was a bridge that had cost $156,000 to build at war-time prices and that cost $220,000 to repair at depression rates. There was another bridge for which the contractors had been paid $185,000 more than their contract. There was a case of 116 inspectors being on the municipal pay roll with only twenty workmen to supervise—a typical patronage scandal. And all the time bonds were issued upon bonds, sometimes to meet current expenses, until at last the city's borrowing capacity was exhausted. Finally the city

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lost control over its finances. A rotten-borough legislature appointed a special board, the Board of Apportionment and Taxation, to act as receivers for the city. Like receiverships in many private bankruptcies, this board proved to be an expensive economy for Bridgeport. Debts continued to pile up. Relief and welfare work was hampered.

It was upon such issues as these that the Bridgeport Socialists waged their campaign. They pointed out that their lone alderman had succeeded in spiking some of the more vicious projects of his old-line adversaries on the council. They showed that Socialist sheriffs need not be harsh marshals for the landlord and the instalment house, but can bring aid to the distressed and shelter for the dispossessed. They asked for the opportunity of serving the people instead of despoiling them.

To a considerable extent the Socialists were helped toward victory by the tactics of their opponents. The Republicans expected to run third in the race and could therefore afford to be gentlemen about it. The Democrats, however, flailed away wildly and often with unconscious humor. They sent emissaries to Reading and Milwaukee to reconnoiter the enemy's territory. They came back with a tale of two cities that was quickly punctured by the Socialists. The Democrats quoted Marx and Debs about the destruction of home, church, and family. They raised the bogy of the I. W. W. As a final stroke of genius they published a full-page cartoon of a closed factory, and said: "Don't let this happen here. Don't vote Socialist." Unfortunately the drawing was too exact a replica of a factory that had been closed for four years.

The newspapers were divided in their sympathies. The *Post* and its morning subsidiary, the *Telegram,* generally played fair. The Bridgeport *Herald,* a curiously lively sheet published only on Sundays, felt the situation best of all, and was all for Jasper and the boys. The *Times-Star* was rabidly Democratic. Even now, despite protestations of good-will toward the new administration, it runs an occasional dig in the news columns and a perpetually sorehead political column.

It would be a mistake to imagine that Bridgeport has really gone Socialist. The citizens have not been converted to the cause by any means, nor are the comrades under any delusions about it. What it really amounts to, I suppose, is that a disgusted city has decided to oust the looters and the spoilers and to give an honest man and a decent crowd a chance to operate. My guess is that the people will be fairly patient and considerate with this new crowd, knowing that they are subject to the sniping and sabotage of political opponents, and that they are hamstrung by an exhausted treasury.

With these reservations in mind I can see no reason why the Socialists should not succeed and why Bridgeport should not continue to vote them into power. But of course next time there will be fusion against the Socialists.

# Underground Germany

By ROGER B. NELSON

THE light that exists today in darkest Germany is to be found underground. There is opposition to Hitlerism, its terror, its aims, its *Weltanschauung,* opposition which is almost suicidal in its heroism and notable for the ingenuity of its organization and its activity. At present it does not rock the strength or vicious leadership of the Nazi structure; but it is direct; it is on the spot; although small, it is growing; although confused, it is achieving clarity. An estimate of this opposition, a sane survey of its forces, trends, errors, possibilities, is a necessity for all of us who feel that fascism is a world menace.

The opposition to fascism comes entirely from labor and works necessarily underground. There are today three main forces at work trying to reorganize the shattered German labor movement, to reestablish the German working class. These organizations, in the order of their size, are (1) the official Communist Party, with from 25,000 to 30,000 members; (2) the Social Democratic Party and Social Democratic Youth organization, with a maximum, together, of 20,000 members; (3) the Communist Party Opposition, with about 8,000 members.

In the official Communist Party of Germany are found today many of the best and most loyal revolutionaries, often raw, as often confused, yet generally heroic and devoted to the source of their inspiration. Their membership is only from 10 to 15 per cent of last year's, as a result no less of wholesale persecution by the Fascists than of the ideological confusion in their own ranks. Hitler's accession to power was a complete and costly surprise to the official Communists, who had been so sure that the revolutionary upsurge would carry them into the saddle that they saw no need for preparing a united front with the Social Democratic Party against the Nazis. So great were the confusion and demoralization of the Communist Party that some of its members drifted to the Nazis. Other confused members deserted because they were resentful against the Soviet Union for not rushing its Red Army into Germany to make the revolution for them.

However, those who were not cowed or killed by the Nazi terror and those who did not desert immediately set to work to organize their revolutionary activities under the new conditions. In gallant efforts to become effective they reorganized their ranks into *Fünfergruppen*—groups of five meeting secretly. They attempted to revitalize the Communist factions inside the Fascist storm troops and security-squad organizations. They sought to enlist as leaders the most trusted of the old Communist Party functionaries. They sought to develop protective measures so that the *Fünfergruppen* might work with greater security. Arrangements were made for the groups to meet in the most respectable places. Churches, parishes, religious schools became hosts unsuspicious of the nature of the guests that they were receiving. Often meetings are held in the homes of respectable Nazi supporters—secretly sympathetic to the opposition—whose reputation is ostensibly the purest. At the meetings no minutes are read or handed out. Every comrade has a special party name. There are no membership cards. No records are kept which might compromise anyone. The

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work at these meetings involves arrangement for the distribution of leaflets and party literature, for work in factories, for revolutionary activities among the growing number of disillusioned Nazis, for revolutionary activities in Fascist "unions." Work is hampered by the fact that communication between the local units and the central leadership is still very weak, that the party has virtually no hold in the countryside and small towns, as it once had, and that only the functionaries meet regularly, as contrasted with the irregular meetings of the groups.

Yet with all these weaknesses and this confusion the party has been able to reach an increasing number of workers. It has been printing and mimeographing papers and leaflets which are circulated widely underground. A heartening example of Communist work, carried out jointly by the official Communist Party and the Communist Party Opposition, occurred this summer. To the chagrin of the Nazi Party and to the amazement of the police, some twenty simultaneous demonstrations were staged in Berlin, one of them on the Alexanderplatz, right next to the central police headquarters. The bold move of staging these meetings in the face of Göring's death threat thrilled the workers, even though the demonstrations were small compared to those of past days. Speeches were hurried, not more than two or three minutes long; they consisted of slogans against war, Hitler, and fascism, for communism and the Soviet Union. At the end the "Internationale" was sung.

Of course the Nazis retaliated instantly. During the night the storm troops, security squads, and Schupos wreaked a horrible vengeance. Hundreds of workers' homes in the Neuköln district, in the Frankfurter Allée, in the Tempelhof section, in the Schönhauser Allée, and in Prenzlauer Berg were broken into after midnight, the furniture smashed, the occupants brutally slugged and dragged away to jail and concentration camps. Nazi spies in the Communist Party rendered retaliation peculiarly devastating, as witness the recent heavy blow to the organization through the wholesale arrest and murder of the best and most experienced local Communist leaders by the Gestapo (*Geheime Staatspolizei*).

The official Communist Party exhibits many weaknesses which, if uncorrected, will lead to sterility of the movement despite the individual heroism in its ranks and its heroism in reorganization. An incident selected from a random assortment illustrates the false approach which leads to typical futile strategy in which results are vitiated at the point of achievement. The following scene recently occurred in Berlin: A crowded workers' section was heavily surrounded by storm troops and security squads while police with rifles slung on their backs lined the middle of the street, faces and backs alternating to keep watch on both sides. Three storm troopers were posted in front of every house, three were in the yards, and three visited and searched each apartment with the usual Prussian thoroughness. Tenants were ordered to shut their windows and keep them shut on pain of facing a rain of rifle bullets.

The reason that storm troops and police had been detailed to duty in this district was that Communist leaflets were being poured into the streets and no one could find the source. The police and storm troops searched for hours. The shower of leaflets did not abate. To this day the Fascists are ignorant of the exact source of the bombardment which they tried in vain to stop. A simple German workman had invented a clever apparatus, built into a roof so that its location was hidden, which shot out leaflets at regular intervals for two hours. So far, very good. But to what purpose was this ingenuity utilized? When the leaflets, in defiance of the rulers of Germany, came out for all to read, what did they say? "Hands Off the Soviet Union." That was all! Not a word about the German workers' unbearable burdens, not a word about the need of all German workers to struggle against the Fascist terror. "Hands Off the Soviet Union"! Even the courage and devotion of the most capable individuals in the Communist Party cannot lift the party out of its world of "dead sectarian illusion" so long as its general approach is through Russia to Germany instead of through Germany to Russia.

The Social Democratic Party, once so powerful, is today smashed on the rocks of its own treason and confusion. Many of the former Socialist Party state officials, mayors and party leaders and trade-union functionaries, have gone over bag and baggage to Hitler. Hitler disposed of such Socialists with the following epitaph: "Your treason we have used. You traitors we no longer need." The second group in the Social Democratic Party is motivated by opposition to capitalist legalism and the ideal of bourgeois democracy espoused by the old Social Democratic Party. Their position is well represented by the Berlin Social Democratic youth who were expelled a few months ago. They wished to continue affiliation with the Second or Socialist Labor International, at the same time vaguely espousing a proletarian dictatorship and rejecting communism. Hesitating, confused, they are traveling in general to the left. The third group in the old Social Democratic Party is definitely going over to communism. In this group and among the Socialist youth in general are to be found many intelligent workers who are satisfied that communism promises more effective weapons for class warfare, for the fight against an enemy whom they hate with an ever-rising fury. The party in all its groups is being constantly persecuted by the Nazi police. A few weeks ago the members of its National Action Committee were arrested in Berlin. The party has, however, forces within it which, working with other underground organizations, can offer a real threat to the Fascist rule.

The Communist Party Opposition consists of the most experienced Communists in Germany. In its ranks are the men who as active revolutionists sought to smash the Kaiser's war plans, who, with Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, founded the Spartacus group, and organized and led the Communist Party of Germany at the height of its power. The Communist Party Opposition alone was not surprised by the Fascist victory. It foresaw the serious menace of fascism as early as 1929, steadily warned against it, endeavored to unify the workers through intense trade-union activities and mass actions against fascism, but failed because of the smallness of its numbers and the poverty of its treasury. Despite some serious losses through the imprisonment, torture, and death of its members, it is today the most effectively organized of the three underground labor parties and enjoys great moral prestige and influence among workers.

The rank and file of the Catholic trade unions, whose organizations also have suffered from the Nazi terror, made an unexpectedly favorable response to the united-front solicitations of the Communist Party Opposition. At the present time, especially in Württemberg and Leipzig, the Opposition

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party group has initiated successful action in a program of building a genuine trade-union movement underground and breaking up the National Socialist unions from inside. The first underground trade-union organ has just been issued in Württemberg under the joint direction of the two Communist groups and the Social Democrats.

The printed word plays a great role in all underground activity against Hitlerism. Many papers are printed in such small type as to require a magnifying glass for reading. With typical German thoroughness the workers provide themselves with special pocket glasses for this purpose and can be seen —if they are not careful—poring over *Vorwärts* (Social Democratic Party, the *Rote Fahne* (Communist Party), and *Gegen den Strom* (Communist Party Opposition), printed on very thin paper in tiny type. Each paper or leaflet usually has ten or more readers per copy.

This steady underground activity may thrill one at most unexpected times. I shall never forget a monster demonstration of storm troops, security squads, and workers' delegations from factories on the biggest square in Cologne. Thousands of brown uniforms, hundreds of flags. The "new Germany" on parade! Division after division of factory workers falling in line and singing mechanically the Horst Wessel song:

Die Fahne hoch! die Reihen dicht geschlossen!
S. A. marschiert mit ruhig festem Schritt.
Kameraden, die Rotfront und Reaktion erschossen,
Marschieren im Geist in unsern Reihen mit!

Every word of this stanza was sung spiritlessly, listlessly—except one. When workers reached the word *Rotfront,* thousands of lusty voices spontaneously yelled it as a greeting, a battle cry for the revolutionary proletariat. By breaking up the rhythm of the Nazi hymn and detaching the word *Rotfront* from the murder promised in the following words, they transformed the spirit of the song into a hope and a challenge. It is small incidents, flashes like this, occurring daily throughout Germany, which indicate the beginning of a revival of the German labor movement. Hindenburg's oak was cut to the ground only a few weeks after it was planted by Hitler. The heroic sailors of the freighter Erica were adamant in their refusal to sing the Horst Wessel song and chorused Communist airs instead.

Whatever light there is today in darkest Germany is to be found underground. All that was good in German culture, all that was inspiring in German traditions, and all that was worth while in the German labor and revolutionary movements will be preserved by the new heroes of the Germany of tomorrow now being reared underground.

# Things Are Better Than They Seem

By PAUL Y. ANDERSON

*Washington, November 25*

SINCE so many people, like Will Rogers, know only what they read in the papers, and like him understand only a little of what they read, it becomes imperative to report that the Administration has not yet broken up into small, ignominious, and mutually repellent particles. In the end it may do so, but the end has not come. The Treasury is not ready to close its doors in despair, General Johnson is neither about to quit or be fired, all the more important members of the Cabinet remain on speaking terms, and there is no general agreement that Hoover and Hurley should be summoned to the rescue. So far as I can ascertain, Roosevelt has not even designated certain newspaper publishers to be shot at sunrise, although there is a surprisingly widespread feeling that the standards of American journalism might be elevated thereby. In short, the situation here is not quite so desperate as the innocent readers of some metropolitan journals might be led to suspect. Continuation of the gold-buying policy has spurred Professor Sprague to depart from the Treasury in a cloud of words, and Acting Secretary Morgenthau's callow handling of his press relations has furnished the excuse for a new outburst against "censorship." There has been a little weeding out here, a little soft-pedaling there, and a little tightening up yonder. Most of this would attract small notice ordinarily, but news has been rather sluggish lately, and it is up to the boys to keep the operators of the night wires busy—otherwise they would be at the Maryland rye. In addition to that, the editorial writers of the Republican press, grown stale from twelve years of wielding the chamois, have got to accustom themselves to the feel of their hammers, and that takes time. I know.

IT may be that the country is rocking along toward unbridled inflation and such attendant calamities as national bankruptcy, economic stagnation, expropriation, communism, and the wholesale nationalization of women, but those who think so will have to be far more convincing before this writer is persuaded. Cheerfully conceding that the destination of the present policy is wrapped in darkness and mystery for me, I must add that its critics have contributed vastly more heat than light. Professor Sprague, for example, fairly sizzled with indignation and alarm, but examination of his radiations disclosed that the one arose from what he considered a culpable indifference to his own opinions, and that the other reflected his fear of what might happen if something else didn't. As for myself, I am more impressed by the declaration of Dr. James Harvey Rogers that the real danger of inflation lies not in the prosecution of the President's policy but in its abandonment. It should be plain to anyone except a banker that some form of currency or credit expansion is inevitable, and that unless Roosevelt's plan brings measurable relief to those who are suffocating under a blanket of debt, Congress will speedily resort to more drastic steps. Indeed, it already is questionable whether Congress can be restrained from doing so in the coming session. Those whom the bogus Mellon prosperity duped into buying homes and farms during the riotous twenties have definitely abandoned the idea that they can ever raise the mortgages on fifteen-dollar wages or forty-cent wheat, and these people, unfortunate as it may seem in a well-ordered banker-and-broker society, have votes and the vulgar habit of using them. The banking, mercantile, and industrial community is far from being unanimous on this subject. Thus, although the United States Chamber of Com-

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merce recently issued a blast in favor of "sound money" from its headquarters here, I happen to know that President Henry I. Harriman has since been catching unshirted hell from chambers out in the country wishing to know why the board of directors assumed to take such a position without polling the dues-paying membership. Nor am I worried about the future of the government's credit. For one thing, Walter Lippmann professes to be—which is always a good sign in the negative—and for another, the matter of credit will cease to be of any interest to me when the government's collapses. If the Administration's monetary policy can be clarified, it should be done at the earliest possible moment; the present status is not conducive to business revival and invites criticism. On the other hand, it is just possible that disclosures now might defeat the main purpose. In any case, salvation must come, if at all, from Roosevelt—the opposition offers nothing that has not already failed. I have even lost faith in that good man, Senator Fess, who used to count the radios and telephones.

* * * * *

IF anyone clings to a scintilla of faith in the men who dominated and directed our financial and industrial policies in the pre-Brain Trust era, it would pay him to spend a few hours attending the Senate stock-market investigation. There, free of charge, he can look and listen as our vaunted ex-leaders, former magnates, and unemployed wizards creep to the mourners' bench one by one and pathetically protest that they were merely guilty of ignorance, avarice, shortsightedness, and an almost total lack of fundamental knowledge concerning the nature of events in which they participated. It is a rather salutary experience to hear the lords of finance hastening to plead financial incompetence before they are charged with more serious offenses. After watching a parade of these figures before the Senate committee I am forced nearer than ever to the conclusion that the ability to accumulate huge sums of money is a trait seldom possessed by any except the very low orders of humanity, and that its possession excludes the owner from virtually all characteristics which enter into the composition of a normally civilized man. It is not merely their lack of ordinary conscience and normal human feeling which impresses me; I am even more startled by their want of mental faculties. Assuming that most of them are telling what approximates the truth about their past actions, they are in downright need of treatment for the commonest types of aberration. Fancy an oil magnate casually handing over $300,000 in cash to a competitor on the mere unexplained word of a broker that the competitor is to be "taken care of"! Picture one of the most successful market speculators in the country confessing that he didn't know what was meant by the terms "wash sale" and "making a market"! Hear a former officer of the world's largest bank solemnly asserting that he understood the phrase "splitting up the gravy" to mean "dividing the prestige"! Reflect that these were the men who guided our economic destinies at the height of "prosperity," and who still manage a contemptuous sneer at the Roosevelt professors! Ferdinand Pecora has performed a superb task in this investigation. He is, indeed, rapidly establishing a reputation as our most brilliant examiner. Combining something of the thoroughness of the late Senator Walsh with the histrionic talents of Jim Reed, he has managed to keep the inquiry on the front page—where it belongs—months after a less gifted operator would have permitted it to languish. He has made it impossible for anyone ever to deny that the market has been systematically and shamelessly manipulated to the detriment of the general public, with the active collaboration of the most "respected" and "conservative" institutions. Incidentally, a new epithet has been added to the profane vocabulary of the Senate press gallery. To insult a fellow-worker in the most mortal and approved manner nowadays one simply sneers: "You Wiggin, you!"

* * * * *

THE fad of playing constitutional lawyer, which recently threatened to become epidemic, has suffered a sudden setback, thus detracting from the enjoyment of an inexpensive depression sport. Seems rather a pity, too. Surely no one was harmed when some obscure Nicholas Roosevelt amused himself by composing a theme on the proposition that devaluation of the gold dollar would constitute a breach of contract as defined by the English common law. There was no compelling reason why an ex-banker should not occupy himself with a dissertation on the reasons which would inevitably compel the Supreme Court to upset the National Recovery and Agricultural Adjustment acts, especially when nobody read them. It was all good clean fun, and the briefless lawyers in particular were having a nice time until Jim Beck elected to while away a few summer days by contributing to the elegant pages of *Fortune* a characteristically profound analysis of the "unconstitutionality" of the NRA. Unfortunately for him and the others, his opus fell into the hands of some authorities on the Constitution, and from that day to this poor Jim has been held up to overwhelming scorn and ridicule by virtually every important legal periodical in print. Nearly every recognized pundit in practice has taken a shot at Jeems, with the result that his patron, Bill Vare, would be moved to public outbursts of grief if it were not that he has troubles of his own. It is little homely tragedies such as this which bring out the latent sympathy in the worst of us.

## Contributors to This Issue

KATHARINE H. AMEND is a Washington newspaperwoman.

JACOB C. RICH is on the editorial staff of the *Jewish Daily Forward.*

ROGER B. NELSON is a newspaperman who has recently returned from an extended trip in Germany.

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RUTH BENEDICT is a member of the department of anthropology at Columbia University.

MARK VAN DOREN is the editor of "The Oxford Book of American Prose."

LEON DENNEN has recently returned from Russia where he was a member of the literary staff of the Moscow *Daily News.*

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FERNER NUHN lives in Iowa and writes for various magazines.

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# Bennington

By HUBERT HERRING

THERE is a seventeen-year-old girl living in our street whose heart is set on attending Bennington College so that she can wear pants. Pants are a symbol. You can run faster in them.

There is a lot of running at Bennington. It is a refreshing and heartening experience to live on the edge of the Bennington community for ten days and to watch the racing. The college is now in its second year, and it ranks as the latest and the most exciting venture in experimental higher education. Robert Leigh and his associates in student body and faculty are building on their Vermont hilltop an institution so boisterously uninstitutional, so forthright and radical as to leave one gasping. This in Vermont, the State where the eternal verities continue eternal, and where women are ladies; the State of Calvin Coolidge and marble.

Robert Leigh left the marble out of the Bennington plan. He has seen how rigid a college can be, and he has fought rigidity in the Bennington scheme of things. If he has his way, there will be no ancient landmarks to which faltering and tearful alumnae will return fifty years hence. Nothing goes on forever at Bennington, neither students nor faculty nor trustees nor president. Trustees automatically retire at the end of seven years. Instructors do not wear the confident air of having settled down for life. The president himself is automatically dismissed at the end of seven years unless ordered to continue by an impartial and independent jury of educators chosen from the outside world. Students find it hard to enter, harder to stay. At the end of two years the student must prove her right to go on for two years more.

There is no rigidity in the curriculum. The new student, to her bewilderment, finds nothing fixed and prescribed. She cannot settle down to the neat and methodical job of checking off courses and credits. She must make choices. She has counsel available, but the decision is hers. She does not take courses, she makes them. The first two years are a period of groping and floundering in which she tests herself and tests her world. Bennington finds no valid ground for the tradition which ordains that floundering shall be postponed to the end of the college course. The new student picks a "trial major"—it is a trial flight on some special project in social studies, literature, science, or the arts. The project chosen, she works as independently as she pleases, with frequent conferences with her faculty counselor. She reads, writes, gropes; there is plenty of waste motion, much discouragement, much sense of being lost. The flickering light which bids her continue is the conviction that somewhere she will find herself caught in a genuine intellectual enthusiasm for a subject in which she will realize her peculiar individual excellence. Projects range all the way from the literature of Greece to the question of inter-government debts, from the modern dance to race amalgamation. Many students make false starts. They pick projects which please father, or projects which previous schooling made seem desirable. Bennington places no premium upon fidelity to the first project chosen. Many girls find that their real interests lie far afield from those they have been drilled to accept. The girl who decided upon economics discovers that birds are more interesting. The shift from economics to birds, from poetry to chemistry, is made easy. The first two years in Bennington furnish the practice period. It is then that the girls are given the chance to reach out in the ceaseless search for genuine interests and aptitudes.

An integral feature of the educational process is the long winter vacation. There is a break of two months in January and February. This is the period when the girls pack up their projects and take them out for a test. If the project is in economics or industrial relations, the girl may secure a job in some industry and by actual experience and contact seek to relate herself to her special field of study. If the project is in the arts, she may go to Paris or Mexico City to see what others are doing. If it is international relations, she may, if means permit, spend the time in travel and discussion. She may go to Washington to watch government function. This mid-winter break is important for students who spend the bulk of the year on an isolated Vermont hilltop. It makes for a sense of reality, and spurs the imagination. This winter, for example, a group will go to Mexico on a trip planned for those whose projects lie in the arts, history, economics, and international relations.

The plan works. The campus seethes with ideas. Table talk reveals a mental alertness and wealth of interest remarkable in a group of eighteen- and nineteen-year-old girls. There is no staleness. There is naturalness, totally without self-consciousness. There is no one who could by any stretch of the imagination be termed a "dean of women." A student is never watched. Whatever rules there are come from the students themselves. These rules represent an open covenant for the keeping of the peace. They are, by all traditional tests, entirely topsy-turvy. You notify the office that you will be out after twelve, you do not beg permission. The clothes that are worn accent the naturalness—trousers, shorts, even orthodox garb. The enthusiasm for old clothes is refreshing. There is nothing self-conscious about it. You gather that clothes do not count.

There is no academic mumbo-jumbo. The magic nomenclature is totally missing—no Professor Smith or Dr. Brown. There are no such things as full professors, associate and assistant professors, instructors, and what not. The faculty cannot disappear at nightfall into some unknown limbo of forgotten men. Students take it for granted that instructors are to be talked with. It is hard on the instructor, but it is education for the student.

There is no ballyhoo at Bennington, no effort to please the outside world. Nor is there any effort to shock that world. In the matter of clothes, of where she goes with the boy from Williams, of smoking, of what you will, the girl is considered to be an adult and to have the right to make her own decisions. Typical of the honesty of the place is the religious program. The regular college chapel, so urgently demanded by substantial and vocal sections of the alumni and supporters of colleges, and so uniformly dull, stale, and tasteless, is not a part of the Bennington scheme.

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There is a program of cooperation with the village churches, and religion is, as in normal life, on an elective basis.

The Bennington plan tends to give perspective, a sense of relative values. There is no lining up of courses in a stiff row, each labeled and numbered, with the creation of the illusion that History of Thought 1 and Mathematics A have the same significance. There is a sublime indifference to minimums. One gathers the impression that the girl whose ambition is to get by, to check off the requisite points of credit to obtain her diploma, will be neither happy nor welcome. The plan contemplates retaining only those who are caught by some enthusiasm, and who give tangible evidence of ability to do something with that enthusiasm.

Pioneer enthusiasts of two decades ago for "progressive" education, who have noted its shortcomings through inadequate execution and may be inclined to raise a skeptical eyebrow at news of another "experiment," will find in Bennington a refreshing vindication of their earlier hopes and beliefs. Likewise, conservative critics of the "progressive" pedagogy, convinced adherents of the more dogmatic and authoritarian type of instruction, had better see Bennington. It may reorient their views. The traditional strictures concerning lack of discipline and the alleged absence of "solid grounding in the fundamentals" appear singularly inapplicable there.

Bennington leaves one with a sense of beauty and eagerness. Robert Leigh has assembled on his hilltop an amazing lot of men and women. They are sharing things known and loved. Genevieve Taggard and Irving Fineman, writers themselves, spread the contagion of creation. Kurt Schindler and Julian DeGray make music live in Bennington. Lewis and Barbara Jones, Thomas Brockway, Martha Hill, Jane Ogburn, and twenty others are there, and throughout the group is a sense of reality and creativeness. Nature has furnished a background of the loveliness which is New England's own; a few people of intrepid faith have supplied the money; the students gathered of themselves, a spunky imaginative lot; the faculty is of the sort which would make any traditional president groan in pain; and Bennington moves on.

# In the Driftway

SEVERAL weeks ago the Drifter wrote a screed about the current fashion of identifying the new federal governmental organizations by initials, usually without benefit of periods, as NRA and AAA. In the course of his random remarks he spoke of Fiorello H. LaGuardia, now Mayor-elect of New York City, and said that there was a mystery in regard to what the initial stood for, adding that the problem was complicated by reason of the fact that there was no letter "h" in the Italian language. For this slip he has been justifiably—though fortunately only figuratively—clouted over the head by Kenneth G. Darling of Cambridge, Massachusetts, who the Drifter suspects has some connection with "fair Harvard." What the Drifter meant, of course, is that the letter "h" does not occur at the beginning of Italian words, with half a dozen inconsequential exceptions, and in those cases it is not sounded. Anybody who has eaten as much spaghetti *al burro* and drunk as much chianti as has the Drifter knows that a mute "h" is regularly used before "e" and "i" to give the hard sound to "g" and "c." The Drifter knocks his head seven times on the floor and asks forgiveness. Incidentally, he has been informed that Mr. LaGuardia's middle name is Enrico, which, translated into English as Henry, accounts for the mysterious initial.

* * * * *

A CORRESPONDENT in Philadelphia, commenting on the case of W J No-Stop McGee, as the printers of newspapers in Washington used to call him because of the ruction he raised if periods were placed after his initials, says that the City of Brotherly Love has an equally difficult individual. "Is it possible," asks the Drifter's correspondent, "that you have never heard of Philadelphia proofreaders' favorite headache—former City Controller WillB Hadley? There have been numerous published explanations, of course, of Mr. Hadley's reasons for insisting upon his Will No-Space B No-Stop, but I quite honestly forget what they are. I prefer to assume that Mr. Hadley was just born that way and couldn't help it." The Drifter's correspondent signs herself Frances BWilliams, and in parentheses underneath, Frances Williams Brown—whatever that may mean.

* * * * *

FROM Pittsburgh comes a letter written by Harold J. Ruttenberg in which he says: "We college boys and girls who have been so thoroughly shown up by the Havana students also have capital letters in our parlance. PU (pronounced 'pew') means Public Utilities; LPAI, Labor Problems in American Industry; etc. Let the proto-martyr figure these following ones out: PF, CET, TOP, AOJ, ELOR, AND, EDP, etc., et al., ad infinitum. We teach them all at the University of Pittsburgh."

* * * * *

FINALLY another correspondent from the Smoky City writes that a quip is going the rounds there which purports to be a telegram sent to a proud mother as follows: "CONGRATULATIONS ON THIS LATEST ADDITION TO YOUR FAMILY STOP WITH BEST WISHES F D ROOSEVELT."

THE DRIFTER

# Correspondence

## Bertrand Russell Takes Exception

TO THE EDITORS OF THE NATION:

In your issue of September 27, page 342, it is stated that I once said, "An equation is less a description of what happens than it is the happening itself." I cannot be *sure* that I never said this, but I hope I did not, as it seems to me nonsense. Could you enlighten me?

BERTRAND RUSSELL

*Penrhyndeudraeth, North Wales, October 30, 1933*

[The editors of *The Nation* do not claim a memory more nearly infallible than Mr. Russell's, but they believe that he made the remark in question in the course of a public lecture at Columbia University some years ago. If he did not, they are sorry; if he did, they hereby permit him to take it back.—EDITORS THE NATION.]

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## Stuart Chase and Power

To the Editors of The Nation:

Your reviewer Catherine Bauer, in disposing of my pamphlet "The Promise of Power" in *The Nation* for October 25, accuses me of insincerity, of betraying a "fallacious and romantic . . . faith in the existence of a 'free,' competitive economy advancing willy-nilly toward Utopia." She points to huge investments and vested interests in power. She quotes one of the power-age results which I recorded, "the collapse of the old unionism and of outgrown theories of class struggle," admits its truth while prophesying in her turn a new line-up of classes, and says flatly that in my pamphlet "beyond this negative remark there is no mention of the means toward electrified bliss."

Miss Bauer has overlooked these two statements: "It is my purpose to indicate the drift of this new technique to date and to plot the curves into the future, on the assumption—which may be quite unwarranted—that an obsolete financial structure will be revised." And the last sentence of the pamphlet: "But the price of this bright Utopia is an economic system which is based on use and function, not on debt and profit."

To ignore these qualifications while accusing me of cowardice for not making them seems indeed to indicate insincerity on the part of one of us.

*Georgetown, Conn., November 15* Stuart Chase

## A Negro's View of Liberia

To the Editors of The Nation:

I read with interest Maurtiz A. Hallgren's article, Liberia in Shackles, in your issue of August 16, but as an American Negro I can find no justification in the facts for Hr. Hallgren's tearful pleading for the Liberian ruling classes. What about the ruthlessly exploited Liberian masses? Are they to be ignored entirely in the efforts of American liberals and humanitarians to bolster up a corrupt, incompetent, selfish, and ignorant ruling class? Is exploitation by Firestone, from the viewpoint of the bulk of Liberians, any more reprehensible than that of their present overlords? Basically Liberia's present ills are mainly the result of the incompetence and narrow selfishness of her present rulers. And if our white and black liberals came down to earth for a few minutes they would start first by attacking this basic problem of misrule by the Liberian politicians rather than the realistic self-interest of the Firestones. The latter are capitalists and business men, not humanitarians, and no one can in the least blame them for acting in their own interests. Who expects them to act otherwise?

It seems to me that liberals too often make a fetish of smallness. They assume that a little business man or a small country has through virtue of its mere smallness some angelic qualities alien to the general run of mankind. They also read into the Negro character idealistic qualities which I doubt could be found in even a host of angels. This tendency is natural in view of the general contempt in which the whole Negro race is held in Western civilization, but does not for a moment justify ignoring the evils of a Negro ruling class in a so-called Negro country. Therefore a true picture of Liberia must include the shadows as well as the high lights, but excepting George Schuyler practically every Negro who has ever visited the country has written about it in terms of praise and has taken good pains to ignore the sordidness, filth, ignorance, selfishness, and general incompetence of its rulers. And here is Mr. Hallgren helping them in this sort of racial mysticism.

*Phoebus, Va., October 23* James W. Ivy

## Good for Akron!

To the Editors of The Nation:

I should like to correct an error which appeared in your editorial of November 15, in which you included Akron among cities that voted against municipally owned electric-light plants. I am very glad to report that Akron voted for the project, the vote being: for 23,823, against 22,242, a margin of 1,581 votes. In further evidence of the city's distaste for private-utility profiteers, it defeated every pro-utility councilman on the ticket.

*East Akron, Ohio, November 15* W. C. McIntosh

## Marxism in Detroit

To the Editors of The Nation:

The effect of the present economic crisis on the minds and incomes of technicians and professionals in Detroit is seen in the attempts of various groups of these people to form discussion and educational organizations for the purpose of finding an answer to the problems with which they are faced. In order to clarify the understanding of people in the professions Pen and Hammer of Detroit announces two courses: Marxism and Historical Materialism. Classes will be held once a week for twenty weeks.

All persons interested should inquire of Pen and Hammer, 111 West Forest, Detroit, Michigan.

*Detroit, November 5* James Root, Secretary

## Milwaukee Pay Rolls

To the Editors of The Nation:

Some confusion has been created by a typographical error in my article Milwaukee Stays Socialist, published in the November 1 issue. A passage in the first paragraph read: Municipal employees "have to wait three months for their pay." The *"have"* should have been *"had."* I was referring to the early summer when salaries were held up for three months. At present, pay rolls are being met quite regularly.

*Milwaukee, Wis., November 16* Ruben Levin

# Finance

## Wall Street and the Gold Policy

BEHIND the blasts for sound money which are issuing from Wall Street lurks a dissension in the ranks which belies the apparent unanimity of opinion in the financial world in opposition to experiments with the currency. This dissension comes as a novel experience to a district which for all its internal disputes and private grudges has traditionally displayed a united front to the outside public. It springs, on the one hand, from genuine differences of opinion on the respective merits of inflation and deflation, and, on the other, from the conflict of special interests, and is increased in many instances by the exasperation of the former financial barons against an Administration which has fooled them, beguiled them into false steps, and stubbornly refused to oblige with the confidential advance information which Wall Street has been accustomed to receive from Washington.

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The lines of battle were drawn at the start of the Roosevelt regime, but the conjuncture of the various forces responsible for the Roosevelt honeymoon was sufficient to keep them in obscurity. Even J. P. Morgan—possibly for reasons of strategy in view of his impending ordeal before the Senate—felt impelled to indorse publicly the departure of the United States from the gold standard in April. However, as time wore on and the Administration's approach to monetary questions became more clearly defined, and as vocal criticism of the New Deal became less taboo, the warriors of Wall Street went forth to battle to the accompaniment of ever-increasing argument and invective.

Foremost among the defenders of sound money have been the orthodox bankers and conservative business men, whose control—either direct or indirect—of a large part of the New York press has given a semblance of unity to the current outcries against the Administration's attempt at a managed currency. These gentlemen, although somewhat timid at first in their protests, have opposed from the start any tampering with the dollar. The Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York, headed by James Brown, senior partner of the banking firm of Brown Brothers, Harriman and Company, and with Ogden Mills Reid, editor of the *Herald Tribune,* and Adolph Ochs, publisher of the New York *Times,* among its vice-presidents, began its series of resolutions against currency experiments in May. The conservative United States Chamber of Commerce has joined in the movement with increasing vehemence. The great banks have thrown their anointed figureheads into the fray, including such men as George Roberts, economist of the National City Bank; Benjamin Anderson, economist of the Chase National Bank; the late Francis H. Sisson, spokesman for the Guaranty Trust Company; Fred I. Kent, director of the Bankers Trust Company and controller of foreign exchange for the Federal Reserve Bank of New York; and Leonard P. Ayres, vice-president of the Cleveland Trust Company.

These protestants offer the orthodox criticism of currency experimentation—that any departure from established monetary standards will lead to uncontrolled currency inflation and that tampering with the currency undermines the confidence of business men in making forward commitments, establishes fictitious price levels, and with the exception of certain special groups deflates the purchasing power of the nation. Underlying these complaints and largely explanatory of their background is the fact that banks distrust any policy which threatens to diminish the importance of the creditor position through which they exercise control over American industry and commerce.

The bankers have had as alternating allies and opponents the irregular forces of the speculative and gambling fraternity of Wall Street proper. This faction rejoiced as it climbed on the band-wagon of the Roosevelt bull market last April. Largely oblivious of the ultimate implications, the boys had nothing but applause for a program which made rising prices inevitable, which primed the Wall Street propaganda machine with favorable business news, and which brought the public running back into the customers' rooms for another wild stock-gambling spree. Their conviction that still higher prices were inevitable survived even the sharp collapse in stock prices in July and was fed during the summer by news reports of further impending inflationary steps at Washington. Then, preceding the bond-refunding operations by the Treasury in October, without warning the news from Washington veered in the direction of sound money. Wall Street could not believe its ears until several weeks of declining stock prices, with consequent losses, convinced it at last that the tide had turned. Thereupon many of the erstwhile bulls turned bears and went short of the market, confident that sound money and a stabilized dollar would bring an extensive retreat of values on the stock market. Their dampened enthusiasm for the New Deal turned into disgust when the President's announcement of his gold policy on October 22 again caught them by surprise and brought a renewal of the upward price trend. They were bitter against an Administration which had twice repudiated its implied promises to the speculators and which refused Wall Street its traditional right to the advance tip-off. Even the renewed promise of higher prices did not ignite the old spark, particularly as the gathering sentiment in favor of regulation of the Stock Exchange made the present no time to further the usual come-on game with the public. Consequently, more in disgruntlement than because of a passion for sound money, many of the gamblers have joined the camp of the hard dollar, which at least promises regularity.

The fight for the soft dollar in Wall Street has thus been abandoned to a group of business men who have thrown off the discipline of orthodox economics and turned toward the activities of the Committee for the Nation to Rebuild Prices and Purchasing Power. This organization, conceived in November, 1932, and formally organized in January, 1933, has embraced as its main doctrine the theory of the managed dollar propounded by Professors Warren and Pearson, a circumstance which probably explains a good part of the committee's success in transforming its policies into established governmental procedure. Its record presents an interesting corollary to the development of the Roosevelt monetary program. In February the committee recommended an embargo on gold exports and the suspension of specie payments; these steps were carried out in March. On April 6 it urged that the dollar be no longer pegged in foreign exchange; this procedure was officially adopted on April 19. Throughout May and June the committee opposed currency stabilization at the World Economic Conference and called for the establishment of a free gold market in this country. On October 16, six days before the President's announcement of his gold policy, when sound-money talk was at its peak, the committee charged that "our price structure is collapsing because the Administration has returned the control of the United States dollar to New York banking and Federal Reserve advisers," and called on its members for their utmost efforts to convince the Administration of the "imperative necessity of the immediate use of monetary powers to cut short the deflation and to rebuild prices." The committee's technique includes an extensive use of radio broadcasting and newspaper publicity and circulation of its reports among Congressmen and members of the Administration, supplemented by personal and individual pressure.

The gentlemen who dominate the committee's activities are for the most part affiliated with companies maintaining a large export business, with companies dependent largely on farm purchasing power, or with the commodity and stock markets. The devotion of a group with such interests to a theory of inflation of prices is self-explanatory. Furthermore, the committee's support of the Administration's program does not extend to such institutions as the NRA, which the committee has by implication attacked as an attempt to supplant "the free institutions of private property and Western capitalism" by "a regimented and regulated economy." The committee's fight against the New York bankers is explained by its complaint that the power of "the men of initiative, of enterprise, who carried the responsibility and managed the economic life of our nation up to 1929" was largely superseded during the depression by the "bankers' and money lenders' control."

As is the custom, the combatants on both sides proclaim an exclusive preoccupation with the public interest. Those on the one side would protect the public from uncontrolled inflation; those on the other would protect the public from uncontrolled deflation and restore prosperity through rising prices. On both sides are the special interests and the desire of Wall Street for self-protection.

PETER HELMOOP NOYES

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# Books, Films, Drama

## Ways Not Winds' Ways

By RUTH BENEDICT

Watching the winds ride up in chariots
Whose coming laid to earth the even wheat,
Snapped branches under, and made embers touch
A world to conflagration, at their feet

I had flung all my service, but that this
Tumult gave way to darkness, and the rain,
Heavily falling, taking from my limbs
Their separate seeming, from my eyes the vain

Fury of lashing branches, bonded me
To ways not winds' ways. Rain and embrace and death
Bar out particulars, are given over
To dark and loneliness, to strangled breath.

## Education by Books

LET us assume that an institution was founded in the year 1933 for the sole purpose of requiring its members to read certain books. These members were called students, for the institution was something like a school or college; and there were a few exacting elders on hand who after announcing their authority began to teach.

The teaching in this institution, like the studying, was at the same time simple and difficult. It consisted in the first place, as I have said, in requiring the students to read certain books. It consisted next in requiring that an intelligible account be rendered of the contents of each book. And it consisted last of all in requiring that the readers be able, in the course of discussing a given book, to prove that their memory of all previous books was accurate and complete.

It was as simple as that, and as difficult. The books were the acknowledged masterpieces of the past three thousand years—masterpieces of poetry, of history, of philosophy, of fiction, of theology, of natural science, of political and economic theory. There were two hundred or so of them, and none of them was read in an abridged edition. Neither was any of them approached through a digest or a commentary, or through a biography of the author which told how many wives he had and what the biographer believed to be the modern significance of his mind. No, these books which the teachers had selected for the students to read—Homer, the Bible, Herodotus, Thucydides, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Lucretius, Vergil, Horace, Ovid, Plutarch, Lucian, Marcus Aurelius, Plotinus, St. Augustine, the Volsunga Saga, the Song of Roland, Thomas Aquinas, Dante, Petrarch, Chaucer, Leonardo da Vinci, Machiavelli, Erasmus, More, Rabelais, Montaigne, Cervantes, Bacon, Shakespeare, Galileo, Grotius, Hobbes, Descartes, Leibnitz, Corneille, Racine, Molière, Milton, Spinoza, Locke, Newton, Swift, Voltaire, Fielding, Hume, Rousseau, Adam Smith, Kant, Gibbon, Bentham, Goethe, Malthus, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Balzac, Mill, Darwin, Dickens, Thackeray, Marx, Tolstoy, Dostoevski, Pasteur, Ibsen, Nietzsche, Freud, Proust, Einstein—these authors, or rather the principal works of these authors, were read naked and entire; and understood.

A few students—some say a good many—had got into the institution by mistake. They complained about the lack of freedom to read what they pleased; some of these books, they insisted, were not suited to their personalities, and they had supposed that what one went to college for was to develop one's personality. Precisely, answered the head preceptor, closing the door behind them with the most obvious and reckless relief. Others proved to be helpless once they were face to face with an author's original sentences; they had been brought up on outlines, introductions, histories of literature and thought, and collections of excerpts, and so had long ago lost whatever ability to read they had been born with. Still others had expected to learn a trade or a profession. Then there was a final group of pedantic youngsters who snorted at the reading list because it was not contemporary. They wanted as swift an introduction as possible to the civilization about them. To the reply that this was that, they were very scornful as they scurried off to become freshmen in some up-to-date college where field trips to factories alternated in the weekly schedule with lectures on large and immediate subjects.

These gone, the others settled down to the task that had been so arbitrarily assigned them. At regular intervals they met in small groups with two or more teachers who questioned them closely concerning the contents of the required, the inevitable book. If they revealed by their answers that they had read it badly, they were forced to read it again. There was no going forward until Aristotle's conception of the individual, or Grotius's theory of natural law, or the unity of "King Lear" was clearly stated. No excursions were made into the culture of the Greeks or the domestic life of the Middle Ages; merely the books themselves were read, discussed, and understood. And so on for four years.

At the end of which time a generation of students was set loose upon a world with many of whose aspects they were not at the moment prepared to cope. The only thing, indeed, to be said in their favor was that they were educated. They were equipped, that is, with so much understanding of what the best human brains had done in three thousand years that they realized without difficulty how few contemporary brains—naturally—were of the best. They were so competent in the recognition of theory that they felt strangely at home in a world most of whose citizens lived by theories without knowing it. They were able to reduce a kind of order out of the childish chaos which they slowly recognized contemporary literature to be. They missed a great many ideas and distinctions which they knew had been fruitful in past centuries, and some of them set about considering the possibility of restoring these to an intellectually impoverished world. Whether they succeeded is not yet known. But it can be said of them that in their own minds they continued to be fairly secure. For never would there be written a book which they could not understand simply by reading it from the first word to the last. They might not save the world. They might not change it. But they would comprehend it.

MARK VAN DOREN

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# Toward a New Life

*Time, Forward.* By Valentine Kataev. Translated by Charles Malamuth. Farrar and Rinehart. $2.50.

VALENTINE KATAEV is undoubtedly a talented writer, and "Time, Forward" in Mr. Malamuth's admirable translation is by far the most significant novel that has come out of Russia within the last few years. Readers of "The Embezzlers," Mr. Kataev's first novel published in America, will not be surprised to find in this book a swiftly moving, lively tale, spiced with picturesque incident. There is, to be sure, a profound difference between "The Embezzlers" and "Time, Forward," both in theme and technique. The two depict vastly different periods in the social development of Soviet Russia. The former is a comedy satirizing the decaying "remnants" of Czarist Russia, the Moscow petty bureaucracy, during the chaotic days of the NEP—New Economic Policy. "Time, Forward," cast against the background of the far-famed Five-Year Plan, deals primarily with Soviet Russia of the "reconstruction period." It is a huge, carefully executed canvas portraying new and young Russia racing against time toward a new life.

In a sense this novel indicates a new stage in the development of Soviet literature, which like everything else in Russia is in a continuous state of transition, constantly undergoing changes and transformations. Indeed, since the October revolution, various credos and dogmas—symbolism, futurism, constructivism, dialectical materialism—have periodically dominated the Soviet literary scene. Until 1932 the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers, popularly known as the RAPP, was the supreme arbiter of Soviet literature. Since the main purpose of the RAPP, composed of a group of young Communist littérateurs, was political rather than literary, its chief function became "heresy hunting." As a result, talented Russian writers who were unable to write dry political diatribes that adhered strictly to the "general line" of the party became silent, and literature in Soviet Russia sank to its lowest level.

It was Gorki who sounded the alarm. Under his influence the RAPP was dissolved. Since every radical change in Russia is accompanied by corresponding slogans, Soviet critics substituted for the ambiguous slogan of "dialectical materialism" the equally ambiguous, although less dogmatic, term of "Socialist realism," which as defined by them simply means: "Write as you please as long as you portray realistically the contemporary Soviet scene." Or, as Gorki put it: "Create the history of the great Russian proletarian revolution. . . . May not a single trifle, not even the smallest detail of our inimitable heroic days of the Five-Year Plan, be forgotten!"

Whether it is "Socialist realism" or not, "Time, Forward" tells more of what is going on in Russia than a dozen books by experts. It is, however, more than a mere photographic record of the Five-Year Plan. Unlike most Soviet novelists, Kataev does not glorify the "machine," "industrialization," "Socialist competition," "tempos," as dogmas and slogans ordained from above. He is primarily interested in the human element, the moving spirit behind this daring social adventure. The "construction of socialism" to him is, above all, man creating a new life whose spirit and tempo he feels and understands.

The story is simple and typical. Word comes to a brigade of concrete-mixers working on a construction plant in the Asiatic part of the Urals—easily recognizable as Magnitogorsk—that a rival brigade in Kharkov has achieved the world record of 306 mixtures of concrete in an eight-hour shift. Immediately the zeal of the Magnitogorsk brigade is aroused. The Kharkov record must be beaten. Here again Kataev discards the prevalent Soviet shibboleths. His hero, to be sure, is the collective—the brigade. But this collective is composed of clearly defined individuals. And each individual has his own motives for wanting to beat the Kharkov record. The foreman of the construction is a careerist whose ambition is to see his name featured in the papers. The peasant "shock brigadier," who is just beginning to realize that "I is we," wants to prove that he is worthy of being admitted to the Communist Party. The engineer, Margulies, the unknown and faithful hero of Socialist construction, believes that "in the epoch of reconstruction, tempos decide everything." Then there is the usual "old-time" Russian engineer who does not believe in beating records because the "construction is not a stunt," the kulak, the reporters, and the ever-present American "specialist." Since the law of "Socialist competition" demands that the Kharkov record be beaten at once, the whole action takes place within twenty-four hours. Battling against human and elemental forces—saboteurs, kulaks, rain and storm—a world record of 429 mixtures of concrete is achieved. Kharkov is beaten. The brigade is about to celebrate its victory, each individual in his own way, of course, when a telegram announces that workers in another plant have made a new record of 504 mixtures of concrete in an eight-hour shift, and Soviet life speeds on.

LEON DENNEN

# An Earlier Post-War Era

*The Strange Life of Lady Blessington.* By Michael Sadleir. Little, Brown and Company. $3.

WHEN Michael Sadleir wrote his life of Bulwer-Lytton, he called his study of the years 1803 to 1836 a "panorama" and promised a second volume, "Gore House or the Life of Lady Blessington." In other words, Mr. Sadleir is using Bulwer and Rosina, Lady Blessington and d'Orsay, as significant examples of the moment in which they lived, the period of the Regency and the fourth George, particularly that span of years between the Battle of Waterloo and the day that Queen Victoria mounted the throne. He has his eye on the present as well as the past, for he believes that our post-war society bears a parallel relationship to the feverish, somewhat decadent activity that followed the Napoleonic wars. In both cases bourgeois society underwent an inward convulsion and moral codes relaxed; spiritual and financial bankruptcies were frequent and extravagant scandals supplied daily news for a vulgar "smart set" driving at a fast clip down to ruin.

In selecting Lady Blessington, Michael Sadleir has again made a fortunate choice for the development of his thesis. His heroine was the daughter of "Beau" Power, one of those blackguard Irish landlords who sold out to the pro-English, anti-Catholic faction that even to this day confuses the problem of nationalism in a starving country. At fifteen the girl was married to a Captain Farmer, and it is Mr. Sadleir's guess that the sadistic advances made by this first husband rendered the future Lady Blessington sexless. At any rate, she returned home to the dubious protection of a drunken father only to escape again from this second horror into the arms of a Captain Jenkins, who sold her for ten thousand pounds to the eccentric, foppish Lord Blessington. Soon after this transaction was completed, Captain Farmer was killed, while drunk, by falling from a high window, and with his first wife dead, Blessington was free to marry the woman for whom he had paid a handsome price.

Naturally Blessington's choice of a countess was not approved by friends or relatives, but this disapproval merely whetted his appetite for reckless behavior. It gave him an excuse to remodel and furnish a country house in Ireland and new apartments in London, and to set off, with a third person in the party, a young Frenchman, Alfred d'Orsay, on a grand tour of the Continent. Like Lord Byron's caravan, Blessington's traveling equipment was something of a circus; it made noise

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wherever it halted, and his lady, starved for social recognition, became an apt, not unintelligent lion hunter, quick to take advantage of meeting Byron and cultivating as best she could her husband's friendship with Walter Savage Landor. From this point onward Mr. Sadleir's narrative follows the ominous downward curve of a Balzac novel.

Mr. Sadleir hints that the relationship between Blessington and d'Orsay was something more than mere male friendliness, and he points as evidence to a crazy will drawn up in d'Orsay's favor by Blessington a short time before the latter's death. It was perhaps inevitable that this weird triangle should be the subject of a particularly sordid round of gossip. The lady, whether frigid (as Mr. Sadleir believes) or not, had great physical charm and d'Orsay had noticeable attraction in male company—both had a gift for creating spectacular entertainment and for wasting huge sums of money.

Mr. Sadleir has some difficulty in erecting a defense for his heroine's conduct. Her part in forcing Blessington's only legitimate child into a marriage with d'Orsay, carrying out the provisions of an irresponsible will, was scarcely to her credit. No matter what her motives or lack of motives, to marry a fifteen-year-old child to d'Orsay was a brutal repetition of her own disastrous experience, and shows, if nothing else, a criminal insensitiveness to the situation over which she held some measure of control.

With its master dead of apoplexy, the Blessington-d'Orsay household, in the teeth of social disfavor, moved from the Continent to London and set up an establishment at Seamore Place. To defray immediate expenses, which were fantastically large, Lady Blessington took to journalism, wrote "fashionable" novels and edited "annuals," publications which have a counterpart today in magazines that publish the worst possible contributions by the best-known names. It was at this point that her orbit crossed that of Bulwer and he is revealed as the weary, kindly "popular" novelist, who in his generosity to fellow-writers seems to have been a forerunner of Arnold Bennett. Among her younger set of celebrities Disraeli shone, and the garish light of the circle at Seamore Place was adequately reflected in his early novels.

In this insecure world of accumulating debts and unearned income, d'Orsay contributed daily to Lady Blessington's growing notoriety. His dandyism, his talent for water-color sketching, his gambling, his show of sportsmanship, made the removal from Seamore Place to Gore House a grand pageant, and food for more gossip. Gore House, however, was the scene of the Blessington-d'Orsay climax; bankruptcy, long threatened, now fell full force upon the household and the sheriff's officer entered d'Orsay's dressing room. Only by a ruse and the advice of his maternal mistress did d'Orsay manage an escape to Paris. Miles of satins, velvets, lace, tons of bric-a-brac, yards of carpet were in the hands of auctioneers. A few weeks later Lady Blessington died in France, and after three years of mild insanity and grief d'Orsay followed her to the grave.

Mr. Sadleir is too adroit, too civilized a historian to point a heavy-handed moral, but from his recital of events one sees how naturally the Victorian reaction set in against the loose living, the shameless ostentation of a privileged class which dominated the period that preceded it. Mr. Sadleir's lords and ladies offer a rough comparison to the so-called "bright young people" of contemporary London, the polished vulgarians behind the footlights of Noel Coward's "Design for Living." I doubt if there will be another biography published this season that will contain a quarter of the valuable social history that Mr. Sadleir's book reveals. If we are to learn anything from the past, it would be well to read again of the decade that brought another post-war era to its close and the moral convictions of a Victorian Age into full power.

HORACE GREGORY

# State of the Story

*The Best British Short Stories, 1933.* Edited by Edward J. O'Brien. Houghton Mifflin Company. $2.50.

*O. Henry Memorial Award Prize Stories of 1933.* Edited by Harry Hansen. Doubleday, Doran and Company. $2.50.

*A Story Anthology, 1931-1933.* Edited by Whit Burnett and Martha Foley. The Vanguard Press. $2.50.

WITH various new prizes, the perennial Mr. O'Brien, and a flourishing new magazine devoted exclusively to the form, it would seem the times are not so bad for the short story. So what have we?

First, the British collection. Firesides and briar pipes. If Mr. O'Brien's anthology may be taken as authoritative, it would seem that the British short-story mind has settled for the present in that alcove known as the "fancy," where it plays with such "clever ideas" as murder in mirrors, levitation, clocks and Time, and resurrection from the dead. (Or how *do* you explain it?) About two stories in the volume avoid these vices and devices: Frank O'Connor's Bones of Contention, which is at least fantastic; and Eisdell Tucker's charming rural genre piece, Flowers for a Lady. Otherwise the collection is unmitigatedly dull.

With the O. Henry volume it is something else again. The first-prize story sets the tone. Gal Young Un, by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, is the sort of story of which Broadway would say that it "clicks." Bootlegging and maternal frustration among the Florida crackers, with a smooth use of idiom and dramatic values—but the characterization is external and there is not an ounce of real feeling in it. Pearl Buck's The Frill, a story of a Chinese tailor and his American patronesses, comes closer to true feeling, errs, in fact, by overdoing it. Of the less stereotyped stories, the present reviewer believes that Erskine Caldwell's famous Country Full of Swedes is highly overrated, its possibility of extravagant comment on New England character missing fire through shoddy writing and a sort of fake boisterousness. For extravagance the reviewer much prefers Dorothy Thomas's touchingly ridiculous The Consecrated Coal-Scuttle. Bill Adams's The Lubber is readable, and Sara Haardt's Absolutely Perfect is a sharp piece in the vein of social irony. But the collection as a whole is not distinguished.

And now what of Art? *Story's* first anthology comes with such blurbs as these: "Most important milestone in American letters since 'The Education of Henry Adams'" (O'Brien); "My excitement over *Story* has become a kind of delirium" (Professor Wunsch). Keeping as clear a head as possible, one finds that in the thirty-three selections there is one absolutely first-rate story and another superior one. For the rest, the volume has the usual gleams of freshness and sincere intentions, mixed with amateurishness and the mistaking of looseness for freedom of form usually found in apprentice writing. There is little radical experiment. Eugene Jolas is unimpressive with an attempt at surrealism; José Garcia Villa inexplicably exhibits the device of numbering each separate paragraph. Numerous stories, as those by Bruce Brown, Helen Todd, Myra Marini, and Charles Kendall O'Neill, are anecdotes, mildly amusing if overexpanded. Naomi Shumway's Ike and Us Moons is old-fashioned local-color melodrama. Kay Boyle is represented by a story whose general pointlessness is not obviated by the ostentation of its dealing with D. H. Lawrence. Whit Burnett's Herr Qualla is entertaining in an aimless, whimsical manner. Carlton Brown does quite well with an adolescent theme. Theodore Pratt carries through an ironical note in Visit with the Master. James T. Farrell and William March are represented by stories poorer than their best.

The two superior stories are James Stern's The Force and

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Tess Slesinger's Missis Flinders. In a solid, unspectacular way Mr. Stern builds up a theme often enough banally sensationalized—that of interracial contact in South Africa—into an impressive, utterly convincing structure. Other contributors to *Story* may well be informed by Mr. Stern's complete mastery of every moment of his story. Missis Flinders, however, goes beyond any other story in the three collections in sustained power, bitter honesty, and truly finished performance. Its theme, abortion, has likewise been sensationalized in post-war literature; Miss Slesinger's brilliantly selected detail and control of form carry her through. There are minor faults—the excrescence of a sing-song mannerism borrowed perhaps from Virginia Woolf or Kay Boyle—but these are superficial. In its bitter reality, going beyond cynicism or other "lost generation" clichés, Missis Flinders is by way of becoming a little classic of our post-war literature.

*Story* may be congratulated for having printed Missis Flinders, which probably could not have been published elsewhere. Except for the work of Miss Slesinger and Mr. Stern, however, the volume is extremely thin, with the smell of diapers upon it. On the whole the three volumes yield a pretty small harvest out of a waste of dulness, stereotype, and amateurishness.

FERNER NUHN

# The Genius of France

*The Spirit of France.* By Paul Cohen-Portheim. Translated by Alan Harris. E. P. Dutton and Company. $3.

WHY is France what she is? Why is she the most united, self-contained, and exclusive of all nations? What has her genius to offer a troubled world for a better future? M. Cohen-Portheim answers these questions more clearly and tersely than any other writer we happen to have read. Like the busy bee, with a sensitive taste he has extracted the essence from a vast garden of historical and artistic flowers and given us the refined product in charmingly condensed form. It is a very different kind of distillation from the innumerable half-baked, emotional propagandist books of similar title about the various countries with which we were deluged at the outbreak of the World War.

Taking architecture, literature, and painting, as well as political and economic development, M. Cohen-Portheim starts with the legacy of the Latin world to France and traces the successive influences under which French genius has manifested itself in different ages—Gothic, Renaissance, Roi Soleil, Philosophes, and the French Revolution. He points out that in each age the French spirit has changed in part, new elements have been added, but certain fundamental characteristics have remained to make the Frenchman of today what he is:

> The Frenchman thinks logically and clearly, but seldom deeply; everything vague, nebulous, half-baked is alien and unsympathetic to him. In action as in thought, in his works as in his ideals, he stands for measure and order. He is no dreamer, he is not given to over-curious speculations, but neither is he a man of restless activity; he stands for cheerful enjoyment of life, for moderation in both work and pleasure. He cherishes no soaring ideals, but his not superhumanly sublime ones he nearly always achieves. No nation contains more wise people, if contentment be wisdom.

Voltaire and Rousseau, their work and its consequences, he regards as France's greatest claim to fame, her greatest gift to the world since Gothic times. Voltaire, in destroying the domination of the aristocracy and the church and in promoting enlightenment, is the spiritual father of modern liberalism and of the political parties which today call themselves democratic. Rousseau, with his fervent belief in equality and in the possibility of making mankind happy, was the father of communism. The revolution began in the rationalistic spirit of Voltaire, but took on more and more of Rousseau's spirit of enthusiasm and perfectibility, until it became a murderous struggle for power, resulting inevitably in a dictatorship. And today Voltaire and Rousseau are still fighting for the control of Europe.

The author cites many other instances of the way in which France has exerted a strong and fructifying influence on the rest of Europe. He believes she will continue to do so in the future. In fact, he believes he already sees signs in France of a new intellectual and artistic movement which he calls the New European Formula. It is built upon French absorption and transformation of foreigners who have settled or worked in France. This results in a new super-nationalism which will override the post-war hyper-nationalisms. Unless this inchoate European movement toward unity, issuing from France, develops into an effective reality, Europe will be lost in the face of the rising tide of Islam and the Far East. To make it effective France and Germany will cooperate toward a better understanding of each other. It is a thesis which he developed half a dozen years ago at the time of the Dawes Plan and the Locarno pacts. We should like to think he is correct. But since the rise of Hitler it looks like wishful thinking.

M. Cohen-Portheim is a very interesting and trustworthy interpreter of the past, whatever one may think of him as a prophet of the future.

SIDNEY B. FAY

# The Crisis in Life Insurance

*How Safe Is Life Insurance?* By L. Seth Schnitman. The Vanguard Press. $2.

THE constant barrage of criticism to which the administration of life insurance has been subjected for the past few years reaches a high point in the present volume. The author, former Chief of Division of the Survey of Current Business in the Department of Commerce, fires broadside after broadside, mixing voluminous statistics with vigorous language, and urges what must be regarded as the only practicable solution to the problem—rigid federal control of life insurance. A further suggestion, federal monopoly of the life-insurance business, presents greater difficulties and is, at least for the near future, beyond possibility. In itself, federal control will eliminate only the confusion and needless expense incident to the vesting of ultimate authority in forty-nine more or less independent sovereigns. As a matter of fact, the insurance companies are actually not averse to federal control, if only it be no more rigid than present State control. But rigid control is exactly, and properly, what Mr. Schnitman desiderates. When we consider that one of our life-insurance companies is the largest financial institution in the world and that one-eighth of our national income went for life insurance in 1932, the folly of maintaining old-era individualism in this field becomes obvious.

To some of Mr. Schnitman's arguments the companies have more or less satisfactory replies. For example, they have long defended the low interest rate and high mortality table on which they compute their reserves, on the ground that we cannot know whether high interest rates and the present low mortality will always obtain and that in life insurance it is better to be safe than sorry. To others of Mr. Schnitman's indictments, however, the companies can frame no ready answer. Why did the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in 1930 (of all years) raise its president's salary to $200,000? Why did the same company spend over $13,000,000 in one year for investment expenses? Why did the companies' executives plunge into railroad securities when expert foresight, at salaries in six figures,

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should have foreseen at least the possibility of other means of transportation in part supplanting the railroads? Why do the companies invest in bonds not due till the twenty-first century, at which time conditions in the particular industry or utility may have altogether changed and the bonds, conceivably, be quite worthless? Why did many of the companies go in heavily for farm mortgages at a time when farm values were badly inflated? As a result of the last error the companies now find themselves in the ridiculous position of gentlemen farmers.

To a certain extent Mr. Schnitman's attack involves the general business system and business attitudes which gave rise, *inter alia,* to the present life-insurance companies. In reading this book one becomes increasingly aware that to isolate a single industry or business for adverse criticism is to break arbitrarily into a seamless web. Obliged to earn interest for its policy-holders and having billions to invest, an insurer may well find itself embarrassed. The immense sums made available by the companies for loans for capital expansion constituted an important factor in the development leading to the depression. The inevitable market that the companies have supplied to municipalities in search of bond purchasers was bound to encourage those municipalities to issue bonds which they should have known they could never pay without the aid of oppressive taxes. The insurance companies are among those who now protest most vehemently against the imposition of those very taxes. Here, too, the companies may be blamed for their failure thoroughly to investigate the financial condition of their prospective debtors.

In the path of rigid federal control, which, carried on in the spirit of the present national Administration, could be relied upon ultimately to cure many of the evils, stands a sixty-five-year-old decision of the Supreme Court of the United States to the effect that insurance is not commerce and therefore cannot be regulated by the federal government. But if the court can see its way clear to reconcile constitutional law with the New Deal, even that obstacle will presently disappear.

WILLIAM L. GROSSMAN

# Shorter Notices

*Prices.* By George F. Warren and Frank A. Pearson. John Wiley and Sons. $3.90.

The real importance of this book lies not in its inherent contribution to economic science, but in the extrinsic circumstance that one of its authors, Professor Warren, now has the ear of the President and is virtually dictating the monetary and gold policy of the United States. The volume is a mine of useful and instructive statistical tables and charts of all sorts of prices and price relationships, but the interpretations of those statistics are often worse than dubious. On the theoretical side, indeed, the book is weak and superficial. The authors are sound enough in their definition of price (p. 69) as "a ratio of the value of a given amount of some commodity or service to the value of a given amount of the commodity used as money. It is a ratio of two values." But they are only half-right when they go on to say that "the use of checks to replace gold currency does not affect the value of gold except that by substitution they reduce the world demand for gold." It is important to recognize the truth in this statement as against, for example, the quantity theory; but the statement fails itself to allow for the temporary distortions of the price level that may be brought about by the creation of unsound credit. The authors are continually oversimplifying, and are driven in consequence to such fantastic assertions as that the rise in prices during the war and immediate post-war periods was the result of a declining demand for gold, while the collapse since then has been the result of an increasing demand for gold! On the compensated dollar the authors have nothing whatever to contribute: their ideas are taken over bodily from Irving Fisher, and it is obvious that they fail completely to recognize the weight and force of the criticisms that economists have made of that scheme for the last fifteen years. Their glib assertion (p. 370) that "if such a [compensated] dollar were adopted, any desired price level could be set and thereafter could be maintained at a substantially stable level" betrays a hopeless obliviousness either to the immense technical difficulties of the plan or to the complex psychological factors by which prices are ultimately governed.

*Southern Mail.* By Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. Harrison Smith and Robert Haas. $2.

This successor to the highly popular "Night Flight" of a few seasons ago continues the effort to extract mystico-poetic values from flying and the lives of fliers. Again we are given the feeling of being introduced into a new and unfamiliar world—perilous, cold, and infinitely noble. Its constituents we recognize as traditional, but the fusion in Saint-Exupéry's pages creates the illusion of something at once new and consoling. For his heroes ride the wind with a stoical unconcern for the world's perplexities or their own safety. Their individual problems fade to nothingness before the brightness of their gesture. That the gesture ends in death does not reduce its glamor. Here the impossibility for these desperate modern mystics of finding in love an absolute comparable to the clean release of action is exquisitely allegorized in the story of an ideal woman, secure in acceptance of her role and function, and an airman to whom her warmth offers insufficient comfort. So in the end the pilot Bernis comes to rest on desert sands, his arms spread wide, his eyes "fixed on the dark blue gulf and the villages of stars." In form the book suggests the cinema rather than the usual novel. Telegrams, flash-backs, parallel action, emotional close-ups, kaleidoscopic bunching of images—the whole is an ingenious job of literary montage. The style vacillates between the badly poetic and the authentically lyrical: "Too soon love's landscape changes. Gone with the wind, desire and tenderness: crossed, the river of fire. Purified and cold, a disembodied spirit stands on a tall ship's prow putting out to sea." The translation by Stuart Gilbert is excellent.

*William Crary Brownell. An Anthology of his Writings, Together with Biographical Notes and Impressions of the Later Years.* By Gertrude Hall Brownell. Charles Scribner's Sons. $3.50.

The fine prose of W. C. Brownell is represented here as well as it could be represented by any other method than the best one—which, in view of the perfection of form he achieved in the critical essay, would be to reprint a few of his essays entire. Failing that, Mrs. Brownell has done the next best thing; she has revealed how many epigrams and shining paragraphs the essays tended to conceal. Her anthology of excerpts is certainly brilliant; and her informal biography of the critic meets a genuine need.

*Homecoming.* By Floyd Dell. Farrar and Rinehart. $3.

Since Floyd Dell has done little else but write his autobiography in various forms from "Moon Calf" onward, "Homecoming" had best be regarded as the definitive edition up to the present date. Mr. Dell is the H. G. Wells hero come to life in America, inhabiting Davenport, Iowa, then Chicago and Greenwich Village in the days when both had an active and sometimes exciting Bohemia. Whatever success Mr. Dell gained came easily; he was thoroughly capable as an enthusiastic editor of a book section on the old Chicago *Post,* and through exercise of the charm still evident in this book he found coeditorship of the *Masses* and the *Liberator* an extended holiday very like the sort of experience that most young men discover at college. Not

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without a genuine twinge of nostalgia Mr. Dell recalls those gay days of his, and one feels that he has learned little more than a sense of regret that they are now gone and cannot be lived again. One suspects that Mr. Dell feels much older than he is and yet is unable to relinquish his claim to being the "youngest generation," and that to settle his mind concerning this seeming paradox, he talks of many things now of small importance—shreds of semi-literary gossip and how he felt falling in and out of love. Perhaps all this is representative of the particular group of which Mr. Dell makes himself the spokesman, but the published results, though quite honest, are equally trivial. His last statement reveals very nearly everything that he has to say: "I can face the boy of eighteen that I once was, without shame. I have gained the courage to love."

*American Literature: A Period Anthology. The Roots of National Culture: To 1830.* Edited by Robert E. Spiller. $1.50. *The Romantic Triumph: 1830-1860.* Edited by Tremaine McDowell. $1.50. *The Rise of Realism: 1860-1888.* Edited by Louis Wann. $1.50. *The Social Revolt: 1888-1914.* Edited by Oscar Cargill. $1.50. *Contemporary Trends: Since 1914.* Edited by John Herbert Nelson. $1.25. General editor, Oscar Cargill. Five volumes. The Macmillan Company.

This is the most elaborate anthology of American poetry and prose since the days of the Duyckincks. The editors seem to have combed the field thoroughly, and it may be said that they have prepared a set of volumes which will be indispensable to teachers of American literature in colleges. At the same time it must be regretted that in their heads and sub-heads they have been such energetic labelers of periods, movements, and groups. There is a rage these days for cutting up American literature into pieces—ever smaller and smaller as new professors rise from the ranks and fall to work with their little hatchets and their pots of mucilage. It is a pity that the present editors could not resist the fashion. For in all other respects they have been original in their judgment.

*Ida Elisabeth.* By Sigrid Undset. Alfred A. Knopf. $2.50.

It is easy to dismiss the theme of Mrs. Undset's latest novel as out of date, but it would be a dismissal based on a superficial consideration. Ida Elisabeth finds no sanctity in marriage to a good-natured, childish husband, but she does accept a responsibility with the act which even divorce does not annul. In the author's usual cautious, stolid manner, in a rhythm like a wayfarer's slow but sure progress up a road deep with heavy, freshly laid Northern snow, the character of Ida Elisabeth quietly emerges, a strong if not a popular figure. No religious scruple enters into Ida Elisabeth's conflict; her conviction arises in part no doubt from an inheritance from generations of women brought up on the doctrine "for better or for worse," but it arises also from Ida Elisabeth's own personality, a perfectly plausible, valid, and sympathetic personality as Mrs. Undset creates it, neither prudish nor weak. Certainly this is no book for those who believe that the past two decades of the twentieth century have relegated all personal and social responsibilities to either the psychoanalyst or the state. One's acquaintance does not have to be large to know that Ida Elisabeth's problem, even when so relegated, has been neither wiped out nor solved, and that Mrs. Undset has made a patient and unspectacular statement of it.

*The Pursuit of Death. A Study of Shelley's Poetry.* By Benjamin P. Kurtz. Oxford University Press. $3.50.

In one way or another all the romantic poets were concerned with Life—regarding it in a new aspect which the capital letter seems to indicate, regarding it as a kind of organic entity, an active principle, meaning by it something at once more positive and more vague than had ever before been meant by the word. It was inevitable, therefore, that they should be concerned with Death. The poets of the time of Webster and Donne had been fascinated by the physical fact of death and by its irony. The poets of the nineteenth century—not only the romantics but the Victorians—were more concerned with evolving a philosophical attitude toward it. Of these, Shelley was most concerned with the subject, just as he was most taken up with the abstract principle of Life. Professor Kurtz points out that almost all Shelley's poems touch on death, and he shows the development of the poet's response to it: the crude horror-musing of his earliest writing, his worship of death as an escape from tyranny, his bewilderment at its denial of life, and finally the great synthesis of attitudes of "Adonais." Professor Kurtz is very minute in his exposition, but two things—in addition to his rather inflated style—mar his book: his refusal to make use of any of the findings of modern psychology concerning a subject on which psychology has much to say, and his avoidance of any attempt to evaluate the philosophical value of Shelley's philosophical-emotional attitudes.

*China's Foreign Relations, 1917-1931.* By Robert T. Pollard. The Macmillan Company. $3.50.

Dr. Pollard here sums up remarkably well the story of China's heroic efforts to rid itself of the unequal treaties. He begins with China's entry into the World War, for it was this step that led to the abrogation of the treaties with Germany and Austria-Hungary and so awakened in the Chinese leaders the hope that they might soon induce other countries to give up their extraterritorial rights and concede tariff autonomy to the new China. Unhappily, the European Powers have been all too reluctant to surrender these privileges and have continued to put off the Chinese with one excuse or another. Their attitude has fostered the rise of nationalism, which from time to time has taken the form of violent demonstrations or outbursts against foreigners. While extraterritoriality is still preserved, the Powers have made some concessions, notably with regard to the tariff. Especially useful, because of its moderation and impartiality, is Dr. Pollard's discussion of Chinese relations with the Soviet Union. The book is an essential addition to any library on the Far Eastern question.

[In some copies of last week's issue of *The Nation* it was erroneously stated that "Peter Abelard," by Helen Waddell, was published by William Morrow and Company. The book was published by Henry Holt and Company.]

# Films

## "Design for Living"

EXACTLY why the Paramount people chose to pay Noel Coward so much money for the title of his last comedy remains as much of a mystery as ever. As a title, to be sure, "Design for Living," like most of Mr. Coward's titles, is a very good one, but it was certainly too much to hope that it would be found good enough to make up for the absence of all the things that went with it in Mr. Coward's play. For there was never any real expectation that these things could be preserved in their entirety on the screen. The theme of Mr. Coward's play was one which not even the hardened New York public could stomach without a great deal of rationalization and self-deception. How, then, could Mr. Hays and the great audience beyond the Alleghanies be expected to tolerate this hilarious illustration of the thesis that three people can live

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together as happily as two? As for certain other implications of the play, those arising from the intensely projected Damon and Pythias relationship between its two heroes, there was even less likelihood of their survival. Finally, the whole thing, as acted by Alfred Lunt, Lynn Fontanne, and the author himself, had more the character of a family charade than of a conventional social comedy that could be played by anybody. It was a sort of "intimate" evening put on for the benefit of those who felt that they knew each of the principal actors personally and would therefore take delight in observing the chemical interactions of their personalities in the same play. It was definitely for New York and for the so-called legitimate audience.

As was to be expected, the first thing that Ben Hecht, who is responsible for the screen play, has attended to is the thorough sanitation of the plot. Gilda is no longer the mature, ultra-sophisticated, and frequently introspective mistress of men's passions of Mr. Coward's imagination, but a fresh young "mother of the arts" from Dakota. The two young men whom she helps to fame and wealth, the one as playwright and the other as portrait painter, are likewise the most clean-cut specimens of American youth that one could well imagine. One has the feeling that at any moment the whole trio is going to break out in a college yell and shatter to bits the unreal situation in which they have been placed. Miriam Hopkins, who is usually such an accomplished comedienne on the screen, is so lost between what her role abstractly demands and what Mr. Hecht, in his rewriting, has made of it that she gives the poorest performance of her career. As for Fredric March's and Gary Cooper's Damon and Pythias, the attempt to give a semblance of persuasiveness to the relationship is ridiculous when it is not, as in certain scenes, truly pathetic. Whatever effectiveness Gary Cooper may have in romantic roles, such as the legionnaire in "Morocco" or the ambulance driver in "Farewell to Arms," he is completely helpless when he undertakes comedy. And Mr. March, who once had a certain talent in that direction, is not very much better. At the same time it is only fair to say that with the dialogue that Ben Hecht has provided not even the original cast would have made much of most of the scenes in this picture. Hardly a line of Mr. Coward's play survives the flattening impress of Mr. Hecht's thumb. In brief, "Design for Living" (Criterion) is a cross that will have to be borne for some time by those who like to have a good word to say now and then about Hollywood and its products.

WILLIAM TROY

# Drama

## Strange Doings at Princeton

I WISH that I knew what the dramatic critics of London had to say on the morning after the first night of—for example—"Charlie's Aunt." The gentleman then representing the *Times* on such occasions was, I am sure, some bearded pundit several shades graver in temperament than I can ever hope to be and at least as deeply interested as I am in the Drama as a Form of Art. Likely enough he had been discoursing no later than the day before upon the new shades of meaning revealed in somebody's interpretation of "Hamlet," or, perhaps, composing one of those perennial essays entitled "Whither the Theater?" Now he found himself face to face with a silly farce destined to be more overwhelmingly popular than any play ever written before in the whole history of the world and its theater.

I am assuming that he saw something of its possibilities and I am assuming also that he could have predicted what I have

*By Julius Meier-Graefe*

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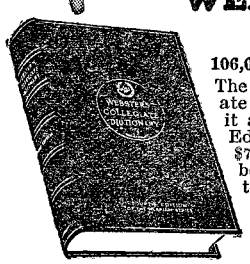

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just discovered—namely, that none of the rather considerable number of books on the drama now at my hand even mentions in the index this same "Charlie's Aunt." The question, then, is merely this: What tone did he think it proper to take under the circumstances? Did he draw himself up to the height of his dignity and point out at some length that the play in question was not marked by either deep feeling, profound thought, or splendid diction? Did he remind his readers that the taste of the public had once been such that Sophocles got a prize and Shakespeare pleased the rabble? Did he add that no nation given over to vulgarity could survive, or did he, perhaps, merely content himself with reporting that everybody, including his own unofficial self, had had a high time, and that, if the truth were told, he did not in the least object to indulging now and then in that form of mirth which originates below the belt? Did he, in fine, discover some way of saying with dignity that "Charlie's Aunt" was as grand a piece of hokum as it had ever been his privilege to witness?

These questions are not merely academic. The problem involved arises very frequently in a more or less acute form, and it faces me at this moment in connection with "She Loves Me Not," which has just opened with remarkable eclat at the Forty-sixth Street Theater. Perhaps I can best solve it by departmentalizing myself after the fashion of the Lord High-Everything-Else in Titipu. As a Critic of the Drama it is then my duty to report that this play is less than nothing, that it is a mechanical combination of most extravagant events, which violates all the canons of taste as well as all the laws of probability. On the other hand, and in my capacity as a simple citizen not unaverse to the lower pleasures, it is obviously incumbent upon me to confess that I laughed more loudly, more continuously, and more whole-heartedly than I have laughed since the first time I saw the Marx brothers. Finally, as a theatrical reporter and prophet, I cannot do other than report, first, that the audience shared my enjoyment and, second, that "She Loves Me Not" will almost certainly be one of the really resounding successes of the year. You may take your choice, but if you are as sensible as I think you are, I know what choice you will make, and as a result of it you will put forth every effort to get into the Forty-sixth Street Theater sometime between now and spring. It may be difficult but it will be worth the struggle.

By way of specific details it may be added that this outbreak of hysteria is divided into nineteen scenes which take place on an ingenious multiple stage going the three-ring circus several better. It concerns the very complicated series of events which begin to take place when an all too chivalrous Princeton senior attempts to befriend a night-club damsel in distress, and you would never imagine that quite so many different actions could, as a result, converge upon a college dormitory. Obviously the thing suggests other high-speed dramas from "Grand Hotel" to "Twentieth Century," but in a number of respects it is superior. One reason is that it is consistent farce and as such never makes the mistake of pretending even for a moment to be serious. A deeper reason is that the piece is written with a certain youthful exuberance instead of, as is too often the case, with a kind of hectic and desperate pseudo-gaiety. It was, I should be willing to wager, composed by some youth who was having a very good time and not, as plays of the sort seem frequently to have been, by a sweating tabloid reporter drawing inspiration late at night from a gin bottle. The only thing to be regretted is that "She Loves Me Not" will probably be imitated *ad nauseam*. I wouldn't have missed it for a good deal but I would just as soon not see anything else alleged to be "just as good."

JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH

"Birthright" (Forty-ninth Street Theater) is a propaganda play about the Nazis, and a good one. It pictures a wealthy Jewish family in 1933 Berlin: the hard-boiled employer; his hysterical wife; his scholar-uncle, who is aware that Jews have always suffered; his converted brother, an army officer; his rash Communist son; his flippant nudist daughter, who regrets that "brutal" men are so rare; and another daughter who is deeply in love with a blond Aryan. It pictures, too, that German boy's confusion—swept by the tides of nationalist enthusiasm, proud of the "new spirit" in Germany, devoted to his Jewish girl, and dumbly sure that somehow all must be for the best. The play is sometimes hysterical; Germany is hysterical today. It flattens into a preachy affirmation of faith in the Jewish future at the end; but how else can German Jews live today? It is moving, and it is true. For there is no Book of Ruth in the German Bible today.

L. S. G.

"Roberta" at the New Amsterdam Theater is a fashion show disguised as a pleasantly sentimental musical play. Jerome Kern's music is pretty and romantic and undistinguished; Tamara, the leading lady, is most captivating, and her singing is a delight; the lines are seldom funny and never witty; there is nowhere near enough good dancing, although the situations offer plenty of excuses for dance numbers; the sets and costuming are beautiful, quite beyond criticism. The whole production is characterized by charm and elegance, rather than spice.

F. K.

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